

The Education and Training Inspectorate

**A Survey of the Provision
for
Pupils with Dyslexia**

MAY 2012



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This summary sets out the main findings of a survey of the provision for pupils with dyslexia since the publication of the Report of the Task Group on Dyslexia (Report) in 2002.

The 2002 Report made a number of recommendations to improve the quality of provision in schools and to inform and clarify strategic planning and policy across the Education and Library Boards (ELBs)¹. (Appendix 1 details the key recommendations.)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out the survey between October and December 2011 visiting 26 schools and observing 90 lessons, and holding interviews with relevant members of staff in schools and with various officers across the ELBs.

1.2 THE OVERALL FINDINGS

The priority given to improving the quality of special educational needs (SEN) provision across schools has developed considerably and made a significant impact since 2002.

In most of the schools visited as part of the survey, the provision specifically for pupils with dyslexia is good or better; in a minority of these schools the provision is outstanding.

Coherent strategic policies to inform practice and ensure better outcomes for pupils have not developed significantly or consistently over the period.

1.3 THE OVERALL CONCLUSION

The 2002 report remains pertinent. A degree of consistency and inter-board working has been established; but the pace at which this has happened has been too slow.

In order to meet the Department of Education's Resource Allocation Plan (RAP) requiring the ELBs to devise a common service delivery model by 2012, more urgent collaborative strategic planning and action by the ELBs is necessary if the key recommendations of the Report are to be fully realised and better outcomes for pupils with dyslexia achieved.

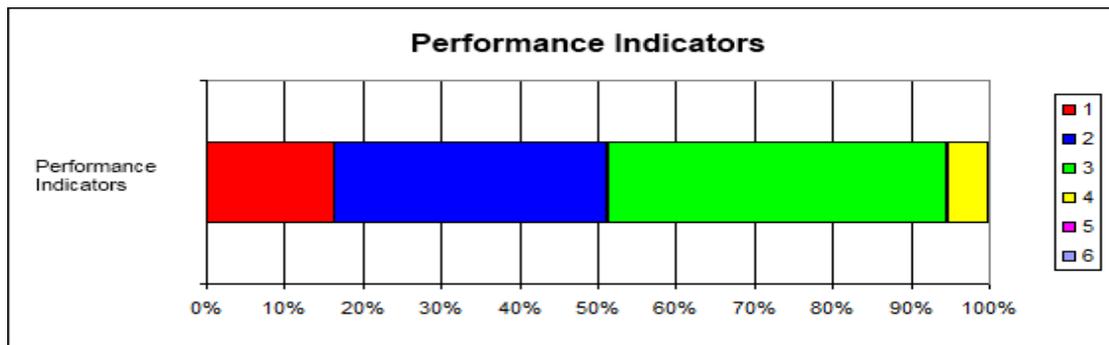
2. THE FINDINGS IN DETAIL

2.1 THE QUALITY OF PROVISION ACROSS THE SCHOOLS VISITED

The focus of the lessons observed (see table 1 below) was on how effectively the teachers planned and used appropriate strategies to enable pupils with dyslexia to engage fully with the lessons. As can be seen from the table, the majority of the teaching observed is of a good or better standard with a minority of lessons of outstanding quality. Teachers and schools have developed and are using appropriate dyslexia strategies in lessons.

¹ Report can be accessed on www.etini.uk

Table 1



In the very best practice, schools are proactive in seeking a range of training for all teaching and support staff, ensuring consistent use of appropriate and effective practice for addressing dyslexia throughout the school and tracking the progress of individual pupils. This action and quality of practice is not consistent across schools. This report recommends that schools need to draw on the good practice to improve the quality of provision.

Where the provision for pupils with dyslexia is most effective:

- the Principal and Senior Management Team prioritise appropriate policy and classroom strategies; school development plans detail the actions to identify and meet needs;
- the staff implements agreed strategies consistently and effectively in all lessons;
- assessment and progression data is used effectively to inform and improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- a range of teaching approaches, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), is used effectively to ensure the pupils' needs are correctly provided for; and
- more intensive individual support is provided for those pupils with additional significant learning difficulties.

Where provision for pupils with dyslexia is least effective:

- a very limited range of teaching approaches is used irrespective of the differing learning profiles of the pupils;
- pupils are required to copy lengthy transcripts and undue attention is given to more effective pupil participation in the lessons;
- there is limited and ineffective use of data to inform practice; and
- there is little consistency in the teaching methodology across classes or whole school planning.

Materials produced by the ELBs and DE were referred to by most of the school staff as very useful initial support to inform staff discussion and teacher planning. The need for further capacity building support and guidance is required if the needs of all pupils, particularly those with complex needs, are to be met effectively.

2.2 THE QUALITY OF ELB SUPPORT

Across the ELBs, there is increasing acceptance, supported by research evidence, that early identification and continuous and intensive intervention, based on assessment of each individual's learning profile, remains the best educational approach for pupils with dyslexia.

The ELBs have worked collaboratively on aspects of the Report's recommendations and a degree of consistency in aspects of practice has been achieved; for example, support teachers are in place to assist pupils and schools, and their work is well regarded and most effective when it impacts positively on outcomes.

The ELBs have also achieved a common agreement for provisional criteria and a model for assessment. There remains, however, inequity in the type and level of provision across the ELBs, for example, there are quite different practices for supporting post-primary pupils with dyslexia across the ELBs.

A working group under the remit of the Regional Strategy Group (RSG) has been established to address the main recommendations of the Report but the inspection team's conclusion is that this action should have happened much earlier to secure commonality, consistency and equity of access to appropriate provision across the ELBs. There is the need to ensure that the outcomes of the working group are timebound and lead to agreed action.

The inspection team find the proposed model of service delivery developed by the Inter-Board officers may provide a sensible basis on which provision can be coordinated and developed more cohesively and further training identified and provided. Given the time which has elapsed, this will require a concerted effort and greater urgency by the ELBs/RSG to ensure this happens.

2.3 INCONSISTENCIES NOTED IN THE STRATEGY AND POLICY OF THE ELBS

These relate to:

- different models of support services and approaches;
- inconsistencies in advice provided to some schools by separate ELB services;
- variation in the extent of access to ELB services by schools, particularly at the post primary stage; and
- delays in the timing of intervention usually provided from year 4 onwards; this is in contrast to the Report's recommendation of early intervention and current research on early intervention.

Effective support is evident where:

- constructive advice and modelling of one to one interventions improved the individual teacher's knowledge and skills;
- the training provided to school staff is continuous and not a stand alone event, but is used effectively to improve and develop consistent and whole school practice; and

- individual support and mentoring helps those pupils who require it, to engage better with learning and improve their learning outcomes.

The ELBs need to ensure the consistent and effective transfer of skills from the support teachers to the class teachers and to classroom assistants where appropriate.

3. **CONCLUSION**

The 2002 report remains pertinent. A degree of consistency and inter-board working has been established; but the pace at which this has happened has been too slow.

It is evident that there is a need to develop, to a greater level, the skills and the capacity of teachers to identify and address the needs of pupils with dyslexia at an early stage and to avoid the current lengthy waiting times for formal assessment and the timing of intervention.

In order to meet the Department of Education's RAP target requiring ELBs to devise a common service delivery model by 2012, then more urgent collaborative strategic planning and action by the ELBs is necessary if the key recommendations of the Report are to be fully realised and better outcomes for pupils with dyslexia are to be achieved.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE TASK GROUP ON DYSLEXIA, 2002

Key points are noted at Chapter 2: 2.1-2.5 and Chapter 3: 3.1- 3.4 and Chapter 4: 4.1-4.8

In particular:

- 2.1 The Northern Ireland Task Group endorses the Republic of Ireland definition,
“Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual’s other abilities. Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processes, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present”
- 2.2 *‘it is our strongly held view that there is a range of difficulties presented by students with dyslexia, from mild to severe, and that there should be a range of interventions to address these needs.’*
- 2.3 *‘The Group recommends effective early intervention to minimise the risk of children suffering the negative experience of academic failure and associated consequences.’*
- 2.4 *‘it is essential that these interventions include whole school policies, within - class approaches and individual interventions at Stages 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice, as well as the type of external support available through the various ELB Services.’*
- 3.2 *‘As a matter of urgency, the 5 ELBs should agree a theoretical perspective and access criteria to inform the future development of provision and support.’*
- 4.2 *‘ELBs should ensure that all teachers have access to a centralised system of advice, support and resources.’*
- 4.4 *‘A Northern Ireland accredited training course on dyslexia should be developed in collaboration with universities, university colleges and ELBs.’*

THE SCHOOLS VISITED AS PART OF THE INSPECTION SURVEY

Primary Schools

Antrim Primary School
Cloughhoge Primary School, Newry
Edenbrook Primary School, Belfast
Forge Integrated Primary School, Belfast
Gilnahirk Primary School, Belfast
Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, Belfast
Iveagh Primary School, Rathfiland
Markethill Primary School
Orangefiled Primary School, Belfast
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Belfast
Portaferry Integrated Primary School
St Canice's Primary School, Dungiven
St Colm's Primary School, Portstewart
St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge
St John's Primary School, Derry
St Joseph's Primary School, Maigh
St Ita's Primary School, Belfast
Rathmore Primary School, Bangor
Round Tower Integrated Primary School, Antrim

Post-Primary Schools

Ballyclare Secondary School
Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle
Lagan College, Castlereagh
Nendrum College, Comber
The Royal School, Armagh
St Cecilia's College, Derry
St Patrick's College, Dungiven

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