

'ABC' School - Dyslexia Aware Policy Exemplar

Purpose

The purpose of this set of procedures is to ensure that 'ABC' School recognises and provides appropriately for children with dyslexic type learning needs. We do this to move towards our vision of all 'ABC' students being the best they can be. Our mission is that 'ABC' School will equip children with a love of learning and prepare students for achievement and success in the future. This includes children with dyslexic type learning needs, and places some particular responsibilities on us.

This set of procedures is rooted in the three key values of the New Zealand Curriculum:

- 1 Excellence
- 2 Innovation, enquiry and curiosity
- 3 Respect

This set of Dyslexia Aware Procedures is our statement of how these values underpin our provision for dyslexic learners /those with dyslexic type learning needs.

Our aim is to support children with dyslexic type learning needs to perform at ability appropriate levels within the 5 key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum:

- Thinking
- Using language, symbols and texts
- Managing self
- Relating to others
- Participating and contributing

Policy Requirements

Dyslexia

1. We have adopted a definition of Dyslexia by leading international expert Neil MacKay, who says that dyslexia is “a specific learning difference which, at any level of ability, may cause unexpected difficulties in the acquisition of certain skills”.
2. We recognise the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (4D) statement that “dyslexia is a continuum, not a distinct category, occurring across a range of intellectual abilities with no clear cut-off points. Difficulties with literacy and numeracy are a common feature of dyslexia, and the most immediate attribute is a problem in decoding words and their meanings. However, this is still only one aspect of a broader spectrum of difficulties affecting skills such as auditory and information processing, planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration. Some of these can make it especially challenging for individuals to follow instructions, turn thoughts into words and finish work on time.”

For more information see www.4d.org.nz

How we recognise dyslexia

3. We will use a recognised range of indicators as a guide.
4. We will ensure that teachers use these indicators consistently.
5. If a child clearly displays a range of these indicators teachers will discuss their concerns and decide upon an appropriate course of action with the SENCO and Learning Support teacher.
6. We will be proactive at raising any concerns with parents at the earliest opportunity possible.
7. Where appropriate we will use an early screening programme for dyslexia to help define appropriate learning goals for each child covered by this set of procedures. If the results of such an assessment identify barriers that prevent effective learning in the classroom environment the child will receive additional support from the Learning Support Programme.

8. In some instances a child may be referred to outside agencies for further assessment. This will always be done with appropriate parent/teacher consultation with a clear reason why this additional information is required. Parents are welcome to pursue their own external assessment of their children. We will work with parents who choose to do this to research appropriate providers of such assessment, and will work with parents to tailor the child's support in school to complement the information provided by external assessment.
9. Regardless of whether formally diagnosed or not we will work to support a child appropriately as soon as we suspect that they may have a dyslexia type learning need.

How we provide for children with dyslexic type learning needs

10. We will create an environment where "no child is left behind" and teachers "notice and adjust" (as described by Neil MacKay in "Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement"). Staff will identify learning preferences for each child, celebrate them and teach to those preferences as opposed to viewing them as learning disabilities, deficiencies or deficits.

A key role of the teacher will be to adapt the classroom environment to suit the learning preference of the children. It will not be one size fits all. The classroom will be a place where difference is celebrated. Children will be secure that they are in an inclusive environment where their learning preference is explicitly factored into their learning, as is our aim for all children. Those with dyslexic type learning differences will not feel excluded or marginalised.

We will build close relationships with parents, child and teacher through excellent, regular and open communication. Goals will be explicit and shared. We value a collaborative partnership. We believe that trust forms a cornerstone of effective partnership.

Early intervention

11. Early intervention is critical and we are committed to identifying children who may have dyslexia as early as possible. We are working towards developing early intervention and assessment tools. In the meantime, using key indicators to think about each child's learning preferences and needs, while teaching in dyslexia friendly ways will aid our early work with children who may go on to be diagnosed as being dyslexic.

Working with parents

12. We will strive to work with parents to create an environment both at home and in school where their child can go beyond any difficulties they have. We will encourage parents to feel comfortable to ask for accommodations that may be required to help their child reach their full potential.

Differentiating work in the classroom

13. Teachers will have the freedom to adapt class work, homework, marking and assessments to fit the needs of the child. Multi-sensory and visual learning preferences will be recognised and alternative ways of presenting work will be accepted as evidence of learning.
14. One of the key Government priorities for education is to enable all students to develop a strong understanding in literacy and numeracy. It is introducing a set of National Standards intended to provide consistent national expectations. Standardised testing may not be appropriate for dyslexic learners. While the National Standards have a firm focus on formal assessment we understand from the Ministry of Education that classroom teachers will be best placed to decide which assessments are most appropriate for individual learners. We will keep the impact of the National Standards and associated assessment regime under review as more information becomes available during 2010. Our aim is to ensure that the strengths of dyslexic children are recognised through appropriate forms of assessment tailored to their specific needs and abilities, so that the results are a fair assessment of their competence against the standards.

Working with other organisations and assistive technology

15. We will continue to raise staff awareness and take advantage of any Professional Development opportunities to increase our knowledge of best practice in meeting the learning needs of dyslexic children.
16. We will develop our links with outside agencies such as SPELD to ensure consistency in a child's learning when they receive additional support outside of school.
17. The school recognises the benefits of Assistive Technology for a child with a dyslexic type learning difference. We will draw on the expertise and knowledge of Resource Teachers - Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) to identify specific technology that may aid learning for individual children. The school is not currently funded to provide Assistive Technology but will work with RTLB and parents to find the best solution.

Consultation

This set of procedures has been developed in consultation with all teaching staff. It has been informed by guidance from the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (4D), the Specific Learning Disabilities Federation (SPELD NZ), Ministry of Education and discussions with several parents of dyslexic students.

Links with other policies

This set of procedures links in particular to the following policies, and for children with dyslexic type learning needs should be read in conjunction with them:

- Curriculum Policy
- Monitoring And Assessment Policy
- Special Education Policy
- Reading Recovery Policy

Monitoring and evaluation

Performance against the purpose of this set of procedures will be monitored throughout the school year.

Monitoring will be based on the “4D method for auditing schools”.

Monitoring is the joint responsibility of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and the Learning Support Teacher.

Monitoring will be reported to the school’s Senior Management team throughout the school year and to the Board of Trustees annually as part of reporting on Special Needs more generally.

Dates of establishment, implementation and review

This set of procedures was developed in .

It applies from the start of the 20__ school year.

It will be formally reviewed in December 20__, or earlier if additional guidance is available from the Ministry of Education or the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (4D).

Ratified by Board:

Signed for B.O.T. _____

Date _____