

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY (SENIOR SCHOOL)

Sheffield High School aims to give each individual pupil the support she may need in order to achieve her full potential. In some cases this support may require a modification of classroom practice and assessment of work, adjustment to the curriculum or special arrangements for examinations. In such cases the pupil is regarded as having a special need, which may be temporary but is more likely to be enduring. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for identifying these pupils, monitoring their progress and arranging support. The Head of Pastoral Care undertakes the SENCO role.

Types of special need

- Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia
- Significantly low levels of achievement relative to the cohort or relative to the girl's own ability
- Significantly high levels of ability or achievement relative to the cohort (See Gifted and Talented Policy)
- Difficulties in English due to recent arrival from another country
- Difficulties with modern languages due to joining the school after Y7 without experience of French or German
- Physical disability or chronic health conditions
- Sensory impairments such as partial loss of hearing or vision
- Speech difficulties such as a stammer
- Mental health issues affecting behaviour and learning, including Asperger's syndrome and other autistic spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorders, oppositional defiance disorders, Tourette's syndrome
- Mental health issues affecting emotional state including depression, eating disorders, self harm, obsessive behaviours
- Difficult home circumstances leading to emotional instability

Identification of special needs

- Parents are asked to inform the school on the registration form of any specific difficulties before their daughter takes the entrance test.
- Medical conditions are reported to the school nurse through the medical admissions form and through the annual personal details forms and consent forms for trips.
- The Junior Department SENCO passes on information to the senior school SENCO in time for special arrangements to be made for the entrance test, and again towards the end of the summer term.
- Some primary and preparatory schools also pass on information about specific learning difficulties.
- Teaching staff are encouraged to report to the SENCO any concerns that they may have.
- The SENCO tracks individual pupils through assessment data and MidYIS results and takes into account any information received from teaching staff.
- If the SENCO needs further information concerning an individual pupil, she may circulate a tick sheet of specific factors that indicate dyslexic difficulties, or consult with teachers and parents about any other issue.
- The SENCO may refer an individual pupil for formal assessment by an educational psychologist, the Dyslexia Institute or other professionals.

Dissemination of information

- A special needs register is compiled and updated regularly by the SENCO. This includes all information about individual children which could affect their performance or behaviour in lessons. It also includes some general advice on teaching dyslexic children.
- A medical plans booklet is compiled and updated regularly by the school nurse. This give advice and information on how to deal with any known medical conditions should the need arise. (See Medical Policies)
- These documents are issued to all teaching staff and they are asked to treat them as completely confidential and keep them in a safe place.
- Teachers are expected to act on the advice contained in these documents in order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. This act covers learning difficulties such as dyslexia as well as physical disabilities. The school nurse and the SENCO are able to offer advice and informal training.
- The school nurse also compiles a “disabilities booklet” which lists all girls with known medical conditions. This is displayed on the “girls” noticeboard in the staffroom and some departments have their own copy.

Physical disabilities

For details of other ways in which students with physical disabilities are accommodated, see Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan.

Support systems

1. Teaching and curriculum support

- All teachers are expected to recognise the needs of individual girls and use appropriate differentiation techniques to enable all pupils to make good progress, following the advice given in the special needs register. Training on these issues is provided informally by the SENCO, the Director of Studies and the Deputy Head, and occasionally through staff meetings, training days and INSET.
- Pupils who have some difficulties with English or modern languages in Y7 are offered the choice of Communication Studies instead of a third language in Y8 and Y9. These pupils are identified towards the end of the Autumn Term of Y7 by the SENCO in liaison with teachers from the relevant departments and taking into account the pupil’s overall level of achievement.
- Dyslexic pupils often have specialist lessons with a private teacher, paid for by the parents. One such teacher works with individual girls or small groups on the school premises before school or during the lunch hour. She provides regular written reports on the progress of her pupils.
- Language support is provided in school by a part time modern languages teacher with qualifications in the teaching of English as an additional language. She delivers an EAL course, including work towards formal qualifications, to pupils and students recently arrived from abroad. She also provides German and French support for KS3 pupils who are new to the school, and English and modern languages support at KS4 for girls who might find it difficult to gain a grade C in GCSE.
- Girls who join the school in Y9 without a background in all of the modern languages may be allowed some library time. At KS4 certain individuals may be allowed library time if it is felt necessary for her curriculum to be reduced. There can be many reasons for this and each girl is considered separately. Arrangements are made by the SENCO and the Head of Year monitors the work of the girls during their study periods.

2. Examinations

- If a pupil has a formal report from an educational psychologist or similarly qualified person identifying dyslexic difficulties, she is allowed extra time for the entrance test. Other arrangements such as reading questions can be allowed in exceptional circumstances. (See Admissions Policy)
- If a pupil has been formally identified as having dyslexic difficulties during KS1 or KS2, and the SENCO feels that she is likely to be allowed extra time for GCSE examinations, she should be allowed concessions in school examinations. These concessions vary between departments, but all subject areas are expected to have a policy on this.
- The SENCO is responsible for ensuring that appropriate evidence is collated for students who might be eligible for extra time or other arrangements for external examinations. She liaises with the examinations officer and checks that appropriate arrangements are in place for both external examinations and GCSE mock examinations.

3. Pastoral support

The SENCO liaises with Heads of Year to ensure that girls with special needs are appropriately supported through measures such as

- **Action plans**, which are intended to be short term and **Individual Education Plans**, which are usually meant to be longer term. These are used to provide opportunities for discussion about learning styles with pupils, and include targets for development, focusing on areas that the pupil finds difficult. Copies are sent home for parents' signatures, and a copy is filed in the staff room to enable teachers to follow the pupil's progress. Where specific actions are targeted, a copy of the plan is given to all relevant teachers.
- **Counselling.** Girls with emotional problems may need appropriate support. Often a Head of Year or another member of staff is able to provide this, and the school nurse also plays a valuable role. The SENCO is able to arrange appointments with a professional counsellor who comes into school once a week. Girls of all age groups are able to access this service but it is most appropriate for girls of Y9 or above.
- **Outside specialists.** The SENCO arranges meetings between teachers and specialists for conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorders etc, where extra input is felt to be helpful.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Identification

Many children with special needs have had their difficulties recognised before they join the school. Medical conditions are usually reported to us by parents, but staff vigilance sometimes leads to the identification of eating disorders and stress before it has been observed at home. Any concerns of this nature should be discussed with the Head of Pastoral Care.

MidYIS results in Year 7 and Year 9 help to identify gifted pupils, dyslexic girls, relatively low achievers and underachievers. As the school year progresses, examination results, reports and monitoring provide more information.

Gifted and talented children

We say that a child is gifted if she has exceptional abilities in a variety of subjects and contexts. A talented pupil is one with exceptional ability in one highly defined area, such as languages, Mathematics, Art or PE. These pupils need to be recognised, stretched and challenged if they are not to become bored and demotivated. They thrive on creative tasks rather than repetitive ones, and, especially when young, will respond to a challenge to the imagination.

The Special Needs Register highlights pupils with exceptionally high MidYS scores, but an unrecognised gifted child may have already started to underachieve before she takes these tests. The following list may help you to differentiate between a high achieving bright child and a gifted one. (*Taken from the Challenge of the Able Child and other works by David George*)

Bright Child

Knows the answers
Has good ideas
Works hard
Listens with interest
Learns with ease
Enjoys school
Enjoys achievement
Likes to be secure

Gifted Child

Asks questions especially "what if?"
Has wild ideas
Scores well on tests without working
Expresses strong opinions or ideas
Already knows
Enjoys learning
Will go out on a limb
Is highly self critical

Each department has its own policy on the teaching of the very able. These girls need challenges to maintain their motivation and many departments involve their students in competitions and events outside the school, in addition to extra stimulation in the classroom.

Profile of an underachieving gifted child

- Test performances below expected levels from MidYIS
- Orally knowledgeable but sloppy written work
- Superior comprehension and retention when interested
- Apparently bored, restless or inattentive
- Dislikes routine practice, homework incomplete
- Excessively self-critical and lacking in confidence
- Poor relationships with peers and teachers
- Possibly emotionally unstable – low self esteem, withdrawn, even aggressive
- Wide range of interests or one highly developed interest
- May be indecisive – can see too many sides to the argument

What to do about it

- If you feel that one of your pupils may be very bright, or gifted, but underachieving, talk to her Head of Year and the Head of Pastoral Care to find out more about her. They may feel that some pastoral support could help

- Include her in the strategies that you use for challenging high achievers in your class, rather than requiring the routine consolidation work that you would expect from 'middle of the road' pupils
- Encourage her to attend clubs and to produce original work
- Set research projects and open ended tasks
- Above all, let her know that you feel that she has potential

Learning difficulties

A course in Communication Skills is offered to a small group of girls who have had difficulty with English and languages in Year 7, replacing one of the language options in Year 8 & 9. New girls joining the school without experience of one of the languages we offer can join this course and girls can opt into the course at a later stage. The Communication Skills course is intended to support the literacy skills of these girls so that they can cope successfully with the curriculum, and in particular with the demands of coursework in Year 10&11. Some of the girls taking this course are dyslexic, but high-achieving dyslexic pupils are expected to follow the full curriculum.

Dyslexia

There are usually 6 – 8 dyslexic girls in each year group and they are listed in the Special Needs Register, with a summary of their difficulties and suggestions on how to support them. Any member of staff wishing to read the full dyslexia report should ask the Head of Pastoral Care. Some parents of dyslexic girls organise private lessons for them outside school hours and the Head of Pastoral Care is able to provide some learning materials. Please refer to the notes below (taken from the British Dyslexia association leaflet 'Tips for Secondary School Teachers') for ideas on how to support dyslexic pupils in the classroom. The Head of Pastoral Care has some books on the subject if any member of staff would like more depth.

If you feel that a girl may be dyslexic please raise the issue with the Head of Pastoral Care. A photocopy of her work with problems highlighted is very useful. Please do not mention your concerns to the girl or her parents as this is sensitive issue and needs to be investigated thoroughly before anything is said. A diagnosis of dyslexia inevitably leads to some distress and extra expenditure.

A dyslexic child may:

- Appear bright but be unable to get her ideas down on paper clearly
- Be clumsy
- Have areas in which she excels, particularly drama, debating or Art
- Act as the class clown to disguise embarrassment
- Become withdrawn, sitting at the back to avoid participating in lessons
- Be able to do one thing at a time quite well but be unable to remember a whole list of instructions
- Look glazed if you speak too quickly
- Go home exhausted at the end of the day because she has had to make an extra effort to keep up with the others

Tell-tale signs. A dyslexic child may

- Be embarrassed when asked to read aloud
- Read inaccurately
- Have problems with spellings
- Confuse places, times and dates
- Need to have instructions repeated
- Have difficulty planning and writing essays
- Forget to bring books and equipment to lessons
- Have difficulty keeping up with dictation or taking notes from the board
- Work slowly, especially in tests and examinations

A dyslexic child is likely to have low self-esteem and little confidence, especially if undiagnosed. Specialist lessons enable children and young people to develop strategies for learning and intelligent dyslexic people are often very successful academically. There is no cure for dyslexia but it can be remediated.

To help with the identification of dyslexic difficulties, the Head of Pastoral Care asks teachers to complete tick sheets, usually in the Spring Term. There are usually several girls in Year 7 under investigation and sometimes some older girls. Using this and other feedback from teachers, the Head of Pastoral Care decides whether to refer individual girls for a full formal assessment by an educational psychologist.

Reports and Examinations

When writing reports please be sensitive to the girl's difficulties and consult with the Head of Pastoral Care if in doubt. In external examinations dyslexic candidates are often allowed extra time or other special arrangements. This is not possible for pupils below Year 11. Please refer to 'Provision for Dyslexic Students in Examinations'. Each department has its own policy for implementing this. A list of girls entitled to some special consideration in their examinations appears in the Special Needs Register and at examination time the Head of Pastoral Care displays the list on the noticeboard

Tips for secondary school teachers

The transition from primary to secondary education is a worrying time for many 11 year olds, but particularly those who are dyslexic. They know it will take them longer than their peers to get used to a new routine; they may be embarrassed by their limited literacy skills, poor memory and lack of organisation; and they may also be worried that their new teachers will think they are stupid.

Regardless of the age of your students you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your teaching as multi-sensory as it could be? Are as many of the child's senses as possible being stimulated at the same time? Is the child using a variety of different learning methods, for example, speaking out loud, writing on cards or talking about a topic with a friend?
- Are you making the best use of the child's strengths and learning style?
- Are you making the most of the fact that the brain retains the ridiculous better than anything else?
- Are you encouraging the use of pocket notebooks and personal checklists, stuck to the child's bedroom wall or desk lid, to remind the child of equipment needed for specific tasks, for example, playing netball?
- Are you making the best use of registration times to encourage self-organisation, like making sure that the child has a pen that works and sharpened pencils?
- Do you give lists of key words to enable the pupil to "over-learn" them?
- Do you hand out revision sheets with a time structure to follow? Do you remind the child of the best methods of active revision, taking account of their individual learning styles?
- Do you ask yourself whether they are sitting next to the right person for maximum concentration and let the child move, if necessary?
- Are you encouraging the child to word-process their work?
- Do you begin every lesson by outlining its content? Do you end with a summary of what has been covered?

Have you considered the use of markers to help the pupil follow work on the board. For instance, putting a section in a box, indenting a new section, using different coloured pens on alternate lines. Keeping her place on board notes is often the hardest task for a dyslexic pupil.

Do you write on the board in capitals? This could be difficult for a dyslexic child. The shape of the word is easier to see if you write in lower case. Similarly with worksheets.

Do you insist on homework being finished? You need to remember that a dyslexic student may work significantly more slowly than her peers, and it may be the case that you will get either half the homework done well, or all of the homework in untidy handwriting with poor spelling. It is helpful if you can make it clear to the student what you expect.

Have you considered printing worksheets on cream paper for dyslexic children. This can help to cut down 'shimmer' and make it easier for the child to read.

And are there any techniques which help dyslexic children play a full part in the classroom by, for instance, encouraging them to answer questions?

Speed of processing can be a problem for the dyslexic child. As one child expresses it: "When the teacher is looking at me I can't always get the answer out – even though I know it when I put my hand up." A helpful tip is to have a previously agreed signal, which tells the dyslexic child that the question is theirs to answer, but not necessarily straight away. The signal, which means 'I will ask you the answer in a minute', could be eye contact or standing next to or in front of the pupil. During that time, you could look around the class, talking about the question to give the dyslexic child the opportunity to collect their thoughts. Give the child the chance to nod or shake their head before you ask them to answer. An orderly classroom, in which shouting out is unacceptable behaviour, is clearly crucial to the success of this technique.

Are there any special methods of giving instructions?

Speed of processing also affects a dyslexic child's ability to take in instructions. They say "I really do try to listen to the teacher, but I forget. When I ask for help I get shouted at for not paying attention." Try teaching an active listening strategy so dyslexic pupils "Stop, Look and Listen" every time the teacher speaks. By practising responding in this way they find, to their surprise, that they recall and understand more. Remember however, that they will not be able to take notes at the same time. Also:

- Make certain the child is listening before giving instructions. You may need to use the child's name so that the instruction becomes relevant to them.
- Don't move around too much and make sure you have eye contact. Talk in close proximity to the child to minimise distractions. Give one instruction at a time.
- Consider whether the child needs to be given an instruction verbally and in writing.
- Bear in mind that a reduced short-term memory is usually accompanied by a reduced capacity for processing sentences. This may mean that complex instructions need to be broken down, with each part understood before the next is given. Keep sentences short and grammatically simple.
- Be prepared to repeat instructions and clarify them by changing or redefining words.

'Learning how to learn' and understanding how they learn best seems to be a key issue for dyslexic children. What does this mean in practice and how can I help children do it?

Discuss the following with the class and encourage children to ask themselves:

- Why am I doing this? – Purpose.
- What is the required end product? – Outcome.
- What strategy should be used? – Strategy.
- Was it successful? – Monitoring.
- How can it be improved? – Development.
- Can it be transferred to another skill? – Transfer.

Secondary school pupils will obviously have to face more examinations than younger children. Are there any tips that I can give to dyslexic children to help them remember?

Active revision is one tried and tested way to help children who have short-term memory difficulties associated with dyslexia:

- Read the work – this is the visual channel.
 - read it aloud onto tape (someone else may need to do this) so it can be played back
- Reduce it – this requires thinking skills.
 - highlight the key words and note the associated ideas
 - try mindmapping or drawing a diagram
 - invent mnemonics, rhymes, acronyms or word associations
 - use coloured pens or arrows to link ideas
 - list key facts and number them.
- Write it – this is the kinaesthetic channel.
 - writing down the main points helps commit them to memory. If a week later the notes are not sufficient to enable the pupil to remember all the facts then they need to go back to the text

- when good enough notes can be transferred to large sheets of paper and hung on bedroom walls.
- Say it – this is the auditory channel.
 - reading notes aloud helps to reinforce memory
- Check it – again, this is using the thinking channel.

Encourage pupils to write a summary at the end of each topic throughout the year. This provides ready made revision material. Practice examination techniques, for example accurate reading of questions and planning answers. Dyslexic pupils will always tend to read more slowly than their non-dyslexic peers of equal ability and be more prone to misreading, especially under stress. They will usually qualify for extra time in public examinations, but only if special arrangements have been the norm in school.

Finally, are there any ‘don’ts’ that I need to be aware of?

- Don’t overload the child either with too many oral instructions or demanding too much written work.
- Don’t ever ridicule errors – very easy to do, even unintentionally – “Not you again.....”
- Don’t make the child completely rewrite their work.
- Don’t ignore the signs that the child is not understanding or losing concentration.
- Don’t make the child work for too long without a break.
- Don’t make the child copy from the board if it can be avoided.
- Don’t always expect an immediate answer.
- Don’t be afraid to use ‘tough love’ – in other words, if you know the child can do better, don’t allow them to get away with a poor standard of work whereby they let themselves down – but talk through the task so they understand how to start again.

English as another language

Girls are sometimes admitted to the school without a good command of English. These girls receive support as appropriate.

When a girl first arrives in the school, she may use an electronic translator to help her in lessons. These are never allowed in external examinations, so we only allow them in school examinations in the early stages. Paper dictionaries are allowed in both internal and external examinations, and students who have been in the country for less than two years are allowed extra time in external examinations, unless they were previously in an English speaking school.

Modern language support

Girls who join the school during KS3 are offered support to help them catch up with French or German if they have not done it before.

Medical conditions and physical difficulties

Girls with medical conditions are listed in a disabilities booklet which is displayed on the pastoral noticeboard in the staff room. If the condition is serious or might cause disruption to lessons, the Head of Pastoral Care writes a medical plan for that individual girl. Medical plans are issued in early September to all staff, with up-dates during the year as needed, and these must be kept strictly confidential and be stored in a safe place where other pupils will not see them.

On the shelf below the pastoral noticeboard there is a file with more detailed information about some illnesses.

Occasionally we accommodate a child who has an injury and temporarily needs to have her lessons on the ground floor. The Deputy Head issues lists of room changes to make this possible. Girls who have to use crutches should be released from their lessons a few minutes early, so that they can avoid some of the congestion in the corridors.

Emotional and behavioural problems, difficulties at home

Girls will need extra moral support and sensitive handling by all her teachers. Heads of Year or the Head of Pastoral Care will draw attention to difficulties during staff briefing, although the nature of the problems will not always be disclosed.