

Hempshill Hall Primary School



Dyslexia & Literacy Difficulties Policy

This policy was agreed by Governors and shared with staff September 2026

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clarify Hempshill Hall Primary School's approach to identifying, assessing and supporting pupils who experience persistent literacy difficulties, including those with dyslexia.

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils have access to high-quality teaching, appropriate intervention and an inclusive curriculum. We recognise that pupils may experience literacy difficulties for a range of reasons and that dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty associated primarily with the acquisition of reading and spelling.

The school recognises that a formal diagnosis of dyslexia is not required for a pupil to receive appropriate support. Our primary focus is on identifying a pupil's individual strengths and barriers to learning and providing effective support as early as possible. This policy applies to all teaching staff and teaching assistants working in any capacity, whether paid or unpaid.

This policy has four main elements:

- Description and definition of dyslexia and literacy difficulties
- Identification and assessment
- Intervention, support and reasonable adjustments
- Working with pupils, parents/carers and outside agencies

2. Description and Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty associated primarily with the acquisition and development of reading and spelling.

Hempshill Hall Primary School recognises the current Delphi definition adopted by the British Dyslexia Association. Dyslexia is described as a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling. Some or all aspects of literacy attainment may be weak in relation to age, standard teaching and instruction, and a pupil's other areas of attainment. Difficulties with reading fluency and spelling are key markers of dyslexia.

Dyslexic difficulties exist on a continuum and can occur at different levels of severity. The presentation and developmental trajectory of dyslexia can be influenced by a range of genetic and environmental factors.

Phonological processing difficulties are commonly observed in dyslexia and may involve phonological awareness, phonological processing speed or phonological memory. Working memory, processing speed and orthographic skills may also contribute to the impact of dyslexia. However, these features do not occur in exactly the same way in every pupil and should not be used as stand-alone indicators of dyslexia.

Dyslexia can also affect the acquisition of other skills, including reading comprehension, aspects of mathematics and learning additional languages. These difficulties should be considered within the context of the individual pupil rather than assumed to be present in every pupil with dyslexia.

A pupil with dyslexia may experience:

- Difficulties with accurate and fluent word reading
- Difficulties with spelling and the automatic recall of spelling patterns
- Difficulties with phonological processing
- Difficulties with verbal or working memory
- Difficulties with processing speed
- Difficulties developing automaticity in reading and spelling
- Difficulties organising written work
- Difficulties recalling or sequencing information
- Fatigue associated with reading and writing
- Reduced confidence or self-esteem as a consequence of persistent literacy difficulties

Dyslexia occurs across the full range of intellectual abilities. It should not be regarded as an indication of low ability or a lack of effort.

The school recognises that pupils may have significant literacy difficulties without having dyslexia. Consequently, provision will be based on identified need and not dependent upon a diagnostic label.

3. Principles Underpinning the School's Approach

Hempshill Hall Primary School is committed to the following principles:

- Early identification of literacy difficulties.
- High-quality, inclusive and adaptive teaching for all pupils.
- Identification of specific barriers to learning rather than reliance on labels.
- Timely and appropriately targeted intervention.
- Regular monitoring of progress and response to intervention.
- Partnership with pupils and parents/carers.
- A strengths-based approach that recognises individual talents and interests.
- Maintaining high expectations of intellectual achievement while providing appropriate support for literacy difficulties.
- Ensuring pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Supporting pupils' confidence, independence and emotional wellbeing.
- Providing reasonable adjustments where required.
- Developing pupils' understanding of their own learning needs and the strategies that help them.
- Using evidence-informed approaches to literacy teaching and intervention.

3. Identification of Literacy Difficulties

The school is committed to early identification of pupils who may be experiencing difficulties with literacy.

Identification will be based on a range of evidence rather than a single assessment or checklist. Information may include:

- The pupil's progress in reading, spelling and writing.
- Teacher assessment and professional observations.
- Phonics assessment.
- Reading accuracy and fluency.
- Reading comprehension.
- Spelling development.

- Written language and composition.
- Curriculum-based assessment.
- Standardised assessments where appropriate.
- The pupil's response to high-quality teaching and targeted intervention.
- Information provided by parents/carers.
- The pupil's own views and experiences.
- Developmental, educational and family history where relevant.
- Observations of factors such as memory, processing, attention and organisation where these may affect access to learning.

The school will monitor literacy progress through its usual assessment systems, which may include formative assessment, summative assessment, phonics assessment, reading records, spelling assessments and other school assessment information.

Particular attention will be given to pupils who demonstrate severe, persistent or unexpected difficulties with accurate and fluent reading and/or spelling despite receiving appropriate teaching and intervention.

A checklist or screening tool may be used as one source of information but will not be used to diagnose dyslexia.

4. Assessment

There is no single assessment that can identify every pupil with dyslexia. Assessment should be holistic and should consider the pupil's strengths, difficulties, educational history, progress over time and response to appropriate teaching and intervention.

The purpose of assessment is to:

- Identify the pupil's strengths.
- Identify the specific areas causing difficulty.
- Establish appropriate targets and outcomes.
- Inform teaching and intervention.
- Identify appropriate reasonable adjustments.
- Monitor progress.
- Determine whether further specialist advice may be required.

Assessment may include:

Literacy assessment

- Word reading accuracy
- Reading fluency
- Reading comprehension
- Phonics knowledge
- Spelling
- Written language
- Non-word decoding where appropriate
- Phonological awareness
- Orthographic skills
- Vocabulary and language skills where relevant

Cognitive and processing information

Where appropriate and undertaken by appropriately trained professionals, assessment may consider:

- Phonological processing
- Working memory
- Processing speed
- Verbal memory
- Rapid naming
- Other relevant cognitive or processing skills

Standardised assessments may be used where they are appropriate, current, valid for the intended purpose and administered by appropriately trained staff.

The school will not use a fixed battery of assessments as a requirement for identifying or supporting literacy difficulties. Assessment should always be proportionate and relevant to the pupil's identified needs.

Where specialist assessment is considered appropriate, parents/carers will be consulted and the school will work with relevant professionals.

5. Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Where a pupil has identified and persistent literacy difficulties, the school will use a graduated approach consistent with the principles of the SEND framework.

Assess

The school will gather information about:

- The pupil's strengths and interests.
- Areas of difficulty.
- Current attainment and progress.
- The effectiveness of previous teaching and intervention.
- The pupil's views.
- Parents'/carers' views.
- Any relevant information from other professionals.

Plan

Appropriate provision will be planned, including:

- Specific outcomes or targets.
- Teaching strategies.
- Intervention.
- Reasonable adjustments where required.
- Staff responsibilities.
- A timescale for review.

Do

The planned provision will be delivered consistently by appropriately trained staff.

Where intervention is provided, staff should ensure that it is:

- Matched to the pupil's identified needs.
- Structured and systematic.
- Explicitly taught.
- Appropriately differentiated.

Review

- The impact of provision will be evaluated using evidence of progress and the pupil's experience. Provision will be continued, adapted or changed according to need.
- This process should not depend on a formal dyslexia diagnosis.

6. Quality First Teaching

High-quality inclusive teaching is the foundation of provision for pupils with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

Teachers will consider the use of:

- systematic and explicit phonics teaching;
- structured approaches to spelling;
- multisensory learning opportunities;
- clear modelling and worked examples;
- explicit teaching of vocabulary;
- breaking instructions into manageable steps;
- repetition and consolidation;
- checking understanding;
- visual prompts and cues;
- visual timetables;
- word banks;
- writing frames and planning structures;
- opportunities for oral rehearsal;
- reduced unnecessary copying;
- appropriately presented printed and digital resources;
- additional processing time where required;
- opportunities to demonstrate learning through different modes where appropriate;
- assistive technology.

Strategies should be used purposefully and reviewed for effectiveness rather than applied automatically to every pupil with dyslexia.

7. Dyslexia-Friendly Classrooms

A dyslexia-friendly classroom should be:

- well organised and predictable;
- visually accessible without being unnecessarily cluttered;
- supportive of different ways of learning;
- explicit in its teaching and expectations;
- responsive to individual needs.

Teachers should consider:

- Classroom environment
- clear organisation of resources;
- accessible and consistent labelling;
- visual timetables and routines;
- visual prompts and symbols;
- word banks and vocabulary displays;
- appropriate access to literacy aids;
- seating that supports attention and access to teaching;
- appropriate use of digital resources.

Teaching and learning:

- clear, concise instructions;
- instructions presented in manageable steps;
- checks for understanding;
- sufficient processing time;
- opportunities to rehearse and retrieve learning;
- multisensory approaches where appropriate;
- explicit modelling;
- opportunities for oral rehearsal before writing;
- appropriate differentiation and adaptive teaching;
- realistic expectations for written output where transcription is a significant barrier;
- alternative ways of recording or demonstrating knowledge where appropriate;
- use of assistive technology where this supports independence.

Reading and writing:

- systematic teaching of phonics and decoding;
- structured spelling instruction;
- opportunities to practise reading fluently;
- explicit teaching of vocabulary;
- appropriate reading support;
- reduced copying where this is not the learning objective;
- writing scaffolds where appropriate;
- feedback that focuses on the learning objective and avoids overwhelming the pupil with corrections.

Presentation of written information

The school will use clear, accessible presentation of information, including appropriate font size, spacing, contrast and uncluttered layouts. There is no single font, font size, paper colour or background colour that is appropriate for every pupil. Individual preferences and needs will be considered where evidence indicates that a particular presentation supports access to learning. Coloured overlays or similar approaches will not be prescribed automatically and will only be used where they have been identified as beneficial for an individual pupil.

8. Additional Support and Intervention

Where high-quality classroom provision is insufficient to address a pupil's identified literacy needs, targeted intervention may be provided.

Intervention will:

- be matched to the pupil's identified need;
- have clear objectives;
- be delivered at an appropriate frequency and intensity;
- be delivered by appropriately trained staff;
- be monitored for impact;
- be reviewed regularly.

Depending on individual need, provision may include:

- targeted phonics intervention;
- precision teaching;
- structured spelling intervention;

- additional reading practice;
- reading fluency work;
- individual or small-group literacy intervention;
- targeted writing support;
- assistive technology;
- structured programmes used by appropriately trained staff.

Hempshill Hall Primary School may use programmes such as:

- 5 Minute Box;
- Precision Teaching;
- Switch-On Writing
- Toe by Toe;
- Switch-On Reading;
- other evidence-informed interventions available to the school.

The use of a particular programme does not replace professional assessment of the pupil's needs. Interventions will be evaluated according to their impact rather than simply their completion.

9. Reasonable Adjustments

Where appropriate, the school will consider reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage because of disability.

Possible adjustments may include:

- additional processing time;
- repetition or rephrasing of instructions;
- visual prompts;
- reduced copying;
- printed or digital resources;
- assistive technology;
- text-to-speech or speech-to-text tools;
- alternative methods of recording;
- additional opportunities to rehearse information;
- appropriate seating;
- reduced written load where writing is not the intended learning outcome.

Adjustments will be individualised. A diagnosis of dyslexia does not automatically result in entitlement to a particular adjustment. The effectiveness of adjustments will be reviewed regularly.

10. Assessment and Access Arrangements

The school will seek to ensure that assessment methods allow pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding without unnecessary barriers. Reasonable adjustments may be made for internal school assessments where appropriate. For statutory assessments, including the Key Stage 2 national curriculum tests, the school will follow the current guidance issued by the Standards and Testing Agency. Access arrangements are based on individual need and the relevant statutory requirements. They are not automatically provided because a pupil has dyslexia and should reflect the pupil's normal way of working where required. Where a reader, scribe, additional time or assistive technology is considered, the school will ensure that the arrangement is appropriate to the pupil and permitted for the assessment concerned.

11. Wellbeing, Confidence and Self-Esteem

The school recognises that persistent literacy difficulties can affect a pupil's confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Staff will:

- use positive and respectful language;
- avoid negative comparisons with peers;
- recognise effort, progress and achievement;
- provide opportunities for success;
- celebrate strengths and interests;
- encourage independence;
- avoid unnecessary public exposure of difficulties;
- provide opportunities for pupils to discuss what helps them learn.

Pupils should understand that dyslexia is a learning difference and not a measure of intelligence or effort.

12. Pupil Voice

Pupils will be encouraged to contribute to decisions about their learning and support. Where appropriate, pupils will be supported to identify:

- their strengths;
- areas they find difficult;
- strategies that help them;
- adjustments that make learning more accessible;
- their preferred ways of demonstrating learning;
- ways in which they can develop greater independence.
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13. Working with Parents and Carers

The school values positive and collaborative relationships with parents and carers.

Parents/carers will be:

- listened to when concerns are raised;
- involved in discussions about their child's needs;
- informed about relevant assessment and intervention;
- invited to contribute information about their child's strengths and difficulties;
- kept informed about progress and the impact of support.

Where parents/carers provide information from an external assessment, the school will consider the recommendations alongside its own professional assessment and knowledge of the pupil. Parents/carers may request access to relevant school records in accordance with the school's policies and applicable data protection requirements. The school will signpost parents/carers towards appropriate sources of information and support.

14. Working with External Professionals

Where a pupil continues to experience significant difficulties despite appropriate school-based provision, the school may seek advice from relevant external professionals.

This may include:

- Local Authority Learning Support Services;
- Educational Psychologists;

- Speech and Language Therapists;
- relevant Local Authority advisory services;
- other appropriate health, education or specialist services.

Referrals will be made in accordance with the relevant service criteria and with appropriate involvement of parents/carers. External advice will be considered alongside the school's own assessment and professional judgement.

15. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and senior leaders will:

- promote an inclusive whole-school approach;
- ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place;
- support staff training;
- monitor the effectiveness of provision.

SENCO

The SENCO will:

- coordinate the school's SEND provision;
- advise staff regarding dyslexia and literacy difficulties;
- support assessment and identification;
- coordinate specialist advice where appropriate;
- monitor SEN Support provision;
- support staff development;
- work with pupils, parents/carers and external professionals.

Class Teachers

Class teachers will:

- provide high-quality inclusive teaching;
- monitor literacy progress;
- identify emerging concerns;
- implement agreed strategies and adjustments;
- contribute to Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycles;
- communicate with parents/carers and the SENCO;
- remain responsible for the progress and inclusion of pupils in their class.

Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants will:

- implement agreed support;
- use appropriate strategies consistently;
- promote pupil independence;
- avoid creating unnecessary dependency;
- communicate observations and concerns to the class teacher and SENCO.

16. Staff Training

The school will provide appropriate professional development so that staff understand:

- dyslexia and specific learning difficulties;
- early indicators of literacy difficulty;
- inclusive literacy teaching;
- evidence-informed intervention;
- reasonable adjustments;
- assistive technology;
- the importance of pupil wellbeing and self-esteem.

Staff training will be reviewed in response to pupil need, changes in guidance and developments in evidence-informed practice.

17. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy and the school's provision will be evaluated through:

- pupil progress data;
- reading, spelling and writing outcomes;
- intervention monitoring;
- SEN Support reviews;
- classroom observations;
- pupil feedback;
- parent/carer feedback;
- teacher feedback;
- review of reasonable adjustments.

The school will consider whether support is resulting in improved access, engagement, independence and progress. Where an intervention or adjustment is not effective, it will be reviewed and adapted.

18. Equality and Inclusion

Hempshill Hall Primary School is committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion. The school recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Where a pupil meets the legal definition of disability, the school will consider its duty to make reasonable adjustments.

The school will seek to remove unnecessary barriers to participation and ensure that pupils with dyslexia and literacy difficulties have access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.

19. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- SEND Policy;
- Equality Policy;
- Accessibility Plan;
- Teaching and Learning Policy;
- Assessment Policy;
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Curriculum policies;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

20. Legislation, Guidance and Further Information

The school will have regard to current statutory guidance and relevant legislation, including:

- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Equality Act 2010;
- SEND Regulations 2014;
- current Department for Education SEND guidance;
- current Standards and Testing Agency guidance relating to statutory assessments and access arrangements.

The school may also refer to reputable professional organisations and evidence-informed guidance, including the British Dyslexia Association and PATOSS.

21. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, assessment arrangements or school practice.