

# Kent's Approach to Supporting Children and Young People Experiencing Difficulties with Literacy Development (including guidance on the use of the term Dyslexia).



STLS Swale have compiled this summary document of the KCC guidance. It is not designed to be an official synopsis or synthesised version. This full guidance can be found on KELSI using the link below: <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/news-and-events/news/primary/kents-approach-to-literacy-development-difficulties-inc.-dyslexia>



## What are the key take-aways?

- Literacy difficulties impact an individual's **life chances** – we must prioritise in schools.
- Literacy difficulties can be viewed on a **continuum**.
- **Early identification and support** is key (learners can otherwise develop negative associations with learning and a vicious cycle begins).
- Schools must exercise their '**best endeavours**' to meet literacy needs.
- The guidance aligns with SEN Code of Practice (2014)
  - **High quality (classroom) teaching** is the first step to meeting needs, including literacy difficulties.
  - Teachers are ultimately **responsible** for meeting such needs.

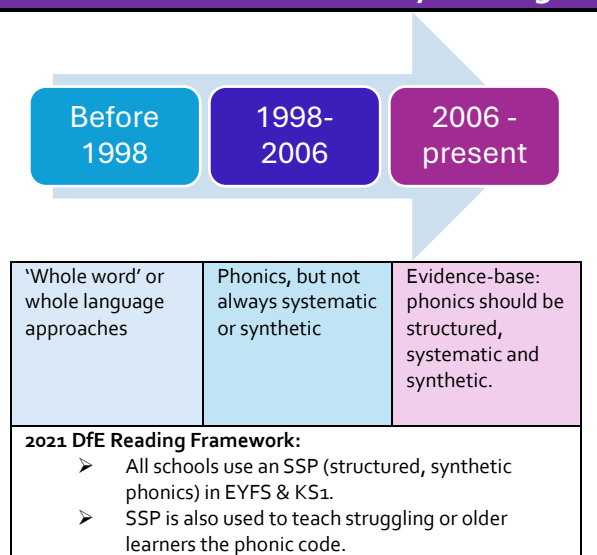
## Key Documents:

- Mainstream Core Standards
- Kent Inclusion Statement
- SEN Code of Practice
- SEND Information Hub

## Authors:

*Kent Educational Psychology Service*

## How do schools teach early reading?



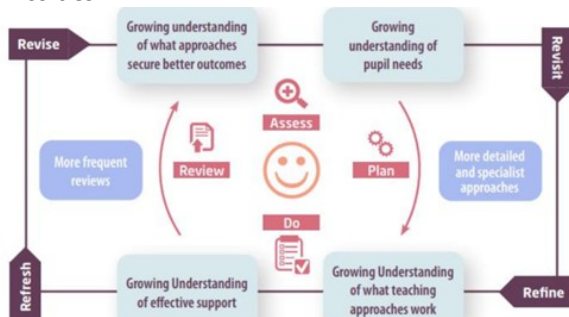
## What might we look for as literacy develops?

- ✓ Oral language skills as the 'bedrock' of literacy
- ✓ Vocabulary knowledge
- ✓ Engagement in book-talk
- ✓ Phonological Awareness – how we process the sounds of our language
- ✓ Development of phonic code/print knowledge
- ✓ Orthographic mapping – the ability to map and commit new words with less familiar letter patterns to memory
- ✓ Reading fluency – (pace AND accuracy)
- ✓ Progression through mark making to recording letters, to phonetic spelling and finally to complex spelling.

### Which questions can we ask if a pupil struggles?

- What is the nature of the literacy difficulty?
- Which intervention or support will help with that difficulty?
- What will that achieve? What will the impact be?

**Assess, Plan, Do, Review** – it is accepted that assessment over time and monitoring response to intervention, is the best way of identifying literacy difficulties.



## Assessment of literacy skills may include:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonic skills
- Reading fluency
- Comprehension
- Spelling
- Writing

May also include assessment of underlying skills:

- Phonological Awareness
- Processing speed

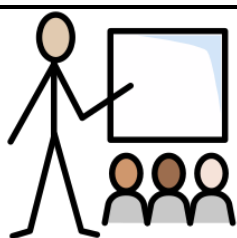
Attention & focus

## Interventions need to be:

- ✓ Evidence-based (e.g. precision teaching)
- ✓ Targeted
- ✓ High Quality
- ✓ Available to all
- ✓ Linked to phonics and vocabulary when spelling centred
- ✓ Multisensory

*Memory training or using coloured tints and lenses are as yet to prove their effectiveness*

Co-occurring difficulties (neurodiverse profiles) may also account for literacy difficulties



## High Quality Teaching should...

- ✓ be highly **structured**
- ✓ incorporate the teaching of the **most commonly occurring skills** first
- ✓ use **distributed practise** (spacing repetition)
- ✓ ensure skills are learnt to **fluency** (not just accuracy, pace too)
- ✓ **interleave** new and old learning
- ✓ include and promote **pupil involvement**

## 'Severe and Persistent Literacy Difficulties'

Severe and Persistent Literacy Difficulties are:

- ✓ Early onset
- ✓ Persistent despite intervention
- ✓ Often linked to difficulties with processing sounds in words
- ✓ Sometimes part of a wider neurodevelopmental difference

*Kent has adopted a widely accepted definition of dyslexia from the British Psychological Society (1999, reprinted in 2005) which focusses on observable learning difficulties:*

"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".

KCC also acknowledge the longer Rose definition, accepted by the British Dyslexia Association. <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia>  
There is a lack of consensus about definitions.

**'Dyslexia' can be used as a term to describe difficulties with reading or spelling identified as 'severe and persistent'. (p.17)**

Standardised measures...  
  
SASC suggests difficulty at 16<sup>th</sup> centile. DSM-V says maybe a difficulty at 16<sup>th</sup> centile, but more likely at 7<sup>th</sup> centile.  
  
So use professional judgement!

**Kent's position:**

- ✓ Dyslexia can occur **across abilities**.
- ✓ Feedback shows that a **dyslexia diagnosis** can offer potentially positive outcomes (clarity, explanation, self-esteem) as well as potentially negative (negative self-perception, sense that little will help, lowering of academic expectations).
- ✓ **Parents** say they want their child's needs to be understood, recognised and supported.
- ✓ Intervention for reading and spelling is best delivered in a targeted, structured, explicit, intensive way. **Struggling readers won't catch up without this.**
- ✓ Evidence suggests there is **no meaningful educational difference** between the reading difficulties shown in pupils with dyslexia and poor readers who do not have this label.
- ✓ **Reasonable adjustments** are key – these pupils are less likely to develop the reading fluency of their peers so efforts should be made to ensure they can access the curriculum despite their specific challenges.

"When working with children, young people and their families or carers seek guidance from them to clarify the language the individual would prefer to use. The term 'Dyslexia' can be used where all parties have a **shared understanding** of what the term means and agree that it is a helpful term to use." (p.17)

**"A formal diagnostic report identifying dyslexia is not required to access additional educational support."** (p.20)  
  
*(Schools can identify difficulties, address these and source relevant training for staff where needed)*

**Assistive Technology can...**



- ✓ help pupils demonstrate their knowledge.
- ✓ foster independence.
- ✓ be widely available & low cost (e.g. in-built Word features) or specific (e.g. reading pens).
- ✓ be best utilised if pupils have sufficient time to practise with the tools.

**Older Learners...**



- ✓ still need to be taught to read, explicitly, where appropriate (e.g. synthetic phonics, fluency practise).
- ✓ may find age-appropriate resources more motivating (e.g. hi-lo books).
- ✓ will benefit from using technology more fully.
- ✓ should be involved in decisions about what will help them.

**Effective use of TAs...**



**"Teachers have responsibility for children's learning, reviewing progress and working to generalise intervention work into the classroom."** (p.21)

- ✓ means small group or 1:1 support delivering structured, evidence-based interventions.
- ✓ relies on sufficient TA training.
- ✓ allows TAs to develop pupils' independent learning skills.

**Access arrangements are...**



- ✓ based on evidence of need and normal ways of working.
- ✓ the responsibility of the school.
- ✓ not always accepted (by examination bodies) if reliant on private reports and assessments. Parents should speak with school.

**Other professional reports...**



- ✓ should be used to help schools build a picture of pupil need.
- ✓ Screeners are of little value unless they inform intervention.
- ✓ The final decision about interventions is the responsibility of the school.

*Health services and Disabled Students Allowance may require a diagnostic dyslexia assessment.*

**EHCPs**



Difficulties with literacy development is a mainstream school issue. Some pupils with literacy difficulties have multiple co-occurring difficulties and complex presentations. If a child's needs cannot be met from within the available resource base, further assessment may be needed through an Educational, Health & Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA), in line with the SEND Code of Practice.