Teacher Training

Problem

74% of classroom teachers do not feel satisfied that their initial teacher training provided them with the skills they need to identify and teach children with dyslexia (see Driver Youth Trust report).

A Teaching Agency survey in 2012 showed 32% of newly qualified teachers rated their training in teaching children to read as satisfactory or poor.

Social and Economic Cost

Much is said about the high levels of illiteracy in school leavers, society’s need for a skilled work force and the problem of disaffected youths. The calculated cost of illiteracy to society is £2.5 billion a year (Every Child A Reader, 2009, p14).

Hidden Disability

The No to Failure study found that 55% of the school children who screened positive as at risk of dyslexia, were not already on the special educational needs register. In other words, most dyslexic children in those schools had not been spotted by their teachers.

No mandatory training on SEN, including dyslexia

Whilst current initial teacher education must include differentiated teaching approaches, ITT courses (even for primary school teachers) are not currently required to teach their students how to recognise dyslexia, how to help dyslexic pupils in the classroom through dyslexia-friendly teaching, or when to refer them for further assessment and intervention.

Proposed SEN Legislation

The proposed SEN legislation places a duty on local authorities to identify those with SEN (clause 22) yet fails to define how they will meet this requirement. If teachers and SENCOs are properly trained not only will they be able to support children with dyslexia on an everyday basis in a cost effective way, they will also be best placed to signpost to more specialist services.

We welcome the statement that the regulations accompanying the proposed legislation state that “All teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs” but teachers are not appropriately trained to fulfil this obligation.
Solution

All teachers should receive mandatory training on special educational needs, including dyslexia.

When Rose (2009) and Lamb (2009) reported it was acknowledged that greater understanding of SEN was needed, along with better identification and support in the classroom through improved understanding of possible barriers to learning and application of Quality First teaching.

The No to Failure study (2009) showed that literacy intervention programmes, set and monitored by dyslexia specialist teachers, are an effective way to prevent what can otherwise be on-going, long-term literacy difficulties. It also showed that early intervention is the most cost effective model and provides the best prognosis for improved literacy skills. This is widely accepted within the sector.

The following further action is recommended:

1. All trainee teachers should receive training on how to identify and support children with SEN and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. There are already government sponsored resources which should be updated and disseminated.
2. All teachers should receive INSET on dyslexia with regular updates.
3. All schools should have effective processes and skills in place to identify possible dyslexic pupils in the Early Years as early identification remains the key to successful outcomes as well as avoiding the stresses and frustrations (faced by children) that are still widely reported by parents today.
4. Once assessment has been made by schools, specialist supervised intervention programmes should be implemented as required.
5. Special needs should become a higher priority in the training and professional development for those in leadership and governance roles.
6. A scheme is needed to enable more teaching assistants to receive training in specific interventions and methods of support.
7. The Dyslexia SpLD Trust has developed a Literacy and Dyslexia/SpLD Professional Development Framework, sponsored by government, which is an on-line CPD tool for teachers and school staff to support them in teaching pupils with literacy difficulties, specific learning difficulties and dyslexia. This point a teacher to which level of dyslexia knowledge and skills they should have for different roles and what continual professional development would be appropriate to build their skills. This can be used individually but also in the context of a school or group of schools to build an effective spread of skills within that setting. Schools should be required to evidence that they have the skills in their workforce necessary to meet the needs of dyslexic pupils.
8. The education system requires teachers with appropriate training to carry out assessment for the purposes of recommending special arrangements for examinations. Schools should be required to fund the necessary training and provide space on the timetable for testing, to ensure that all eligible children get these provisions.

9. The requirement for SENCO training should be continued and should contain a consistent high level of dyslexia training input.

**Question for government – action on the Children and Families Bill**

How will the government ensure that teachers have the confidence, competence and commitment to support those children and young people with educational needs, particularly those with dyslexia and specific learning disabilities?

**New Clause 62: Teacher Training**

A new clause to be inserted in Section 62 to ensure that all teachers are trained to understand dyslexia, its impact on learning and what constitutes dyslexia friendly practice. As such we are calling for Teacher Training to include a mandatory module on special educational needs, including dyslexia:

**S62 Teachers**

1. **This section imposes duties on the appropriate authorities of the following schools in England –**
   
   (a) mainstream schools;
   
   (b) maintained nursery schools.

2. **The appropriate authority must ensure all new teachers have undertaken in their Initial Teacher Training a mandatory module on special educational needs, including dyslexia.**

3. **The “appropriate authority” for a school is -**

   (a) in the case of a maintained school or maintained nursery school, the governing body;

**Existing Clause 62 (2): SEN co-ordinators Training**

An addition to clause 62 (2) to ensure SEN Co-ordinators are properly trained in dyslexia and other special educational needs. At present their training can be largely
administrative and not of a practical nature in assisting those children and young people who struggle to read and write:

(2) The appropriate authority must designate a member of staff who shall be a qualified teacher and must have undertaken training to include a mandatory module on special educational needs, including dyslexia at the school (to be known as the “SEN co-ordinator”) as having responsibility for co-ordinating the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

References:


Every Child A Reader: Reading Recovery [online] (2009), available at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmsctech/44/4405.htm#a7

Interventions for Literacy: http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk

Lindsay, G et al. (2011) Evaluation of Impact of DfE investment in initiatives designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to SEN and disabilities; Department of Education.

The Literacy and Dyslexia Professional Development Framework: http://framework.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk


Rose, J. (2009) Identifying and Teaching Children and Young people with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties