

About the Driver Youth Trust

The Driver Youth Trust is a charity dedicated to improving the life chances of children and young people, with a focus on those who struggle with literacy, particularly children with dyslexia.

We work in partnership with other organisations to help children to access education, build their confidence and realise their goals.

We campaign for policy change so that all children, including those with dyslexia, get the right support to learn to read and write and reach their full potential.

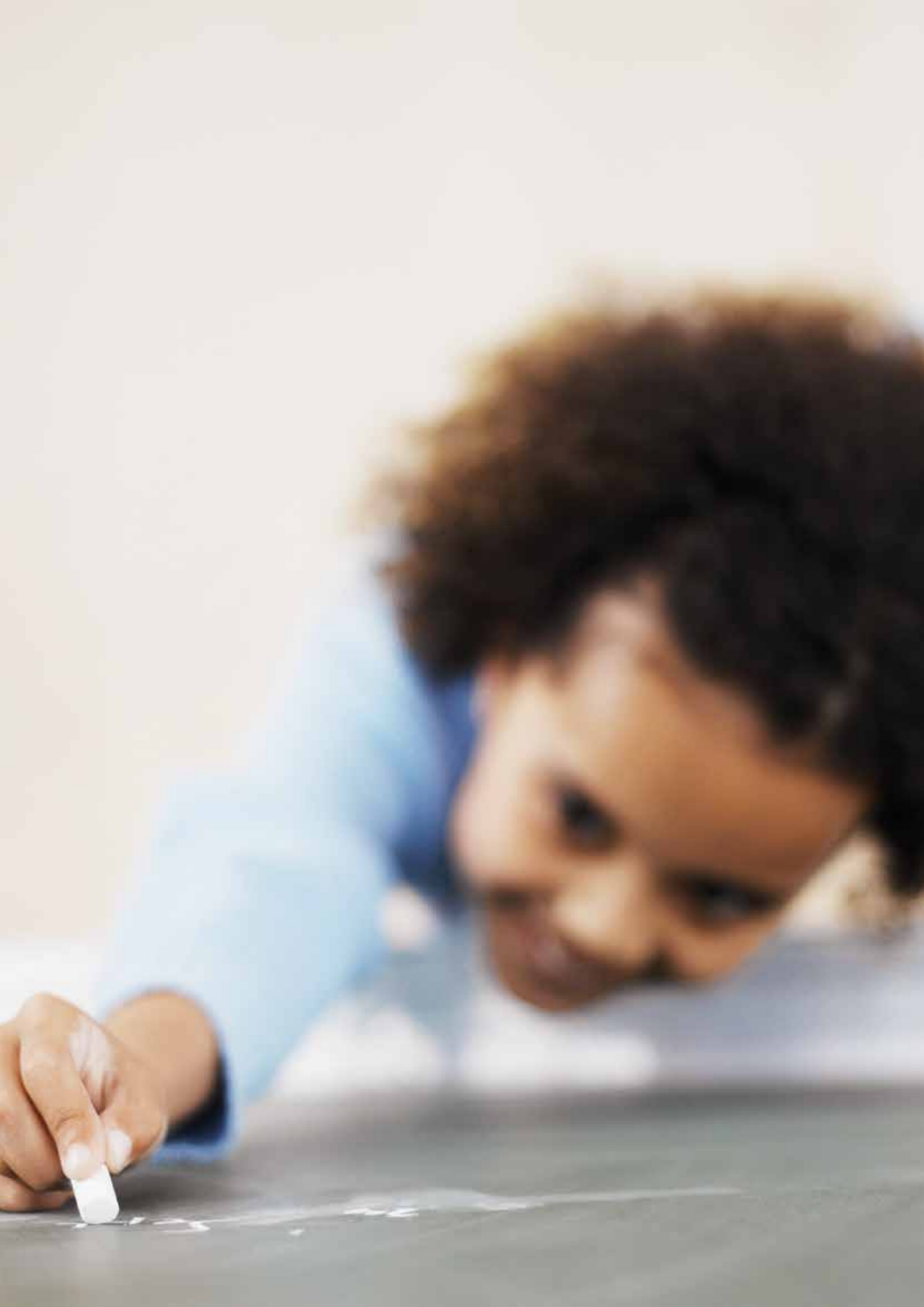
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The Driver Youth Trust is a registered charity, number: 1120720.

The fish in the tree: Why we are failing children with dyslexia



'If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.'
Attributed to Albert Einstein who is thought to have been dyslexic



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Hello,
 I am Archie DRIVER, I am 14 and severely Dyslexic. I find it very difficult to read or write, luckily my Mum found a school where people understand me; I suddenly became me, I was no longer a failure, I was no longer the kid on the 'Spelshall' table where I was told to think that I was different than everyone else. Where I was told to think I was worse. I try my best I sat at the front and asked questions but still the teacher held me in at break, because I wasn't trying I remember looking out the window watch all my friend laughing playing football or 40-40, while my teacher got angry at me for trying to tell him what I had learnt not right if down. In Year 2 I came home excited in class we were going to write a story; I told Mum she knew that I would not be able to do it. So that night she wrote down what I wanted to say it wasn't a great story but at least it was a story. The next day I attempted it again this time without the aid of a scribe

Hello, I am Archie Driver.

I am 14 and severely dyslexic. I find it very difficult to read or write. Luckily my mum found a school where people understand me. I suddenly became me. I was no longer a failure. I was no longer the kid on the 'special' table where I was taught to think that I was different than everyone else — where I was taught to think I was worse.

I tried my best. I sat at the front and asked questions, but still the teacher held me in at break, because I 'wasn't trying'.

I remember looking out of the window, watching all my friends laughing, playing football or 40-40, while my teacher got angry at me for trying to tell him what I had learnt but could not write down.

In Year 2, I came home excited. In class we were going to write a story. I told Mum. She knew I wouldn't be able to do it, so that night she wrote down what I wanted to say. It wasn't a great story, but at least it was a story. The next day I attempted it again in class, this time without the aid of a scribe.

I had nothing all my ideas bubbled up inside me, But all that came out were hasent scribbles on the page. it was so frustrating. I only lasted ~~one term~~ 1/2 a term of Year 3 before I moved to a school which cared I was still the most dyslexic sick But they understood me.

Now the help I get is incredible, learning is now fun I am not scared of going to class I am not scared of putting my hand up I don't have the fear of 'read page 52-53 and answer questions' and the optimistic look round the room for a mate to help you out, and then the worst part: the awkward walk to the front of the room in front of an audience of Gunge mental kid thinking there better than you because you have to ask the teacher for help. the teacher who is always taken by surprise talks to loudly telling every one what you are most inbawsit about. Because of the help archie DRIVER gets he is finally allowed to Be me.

I had nothing. All my ideas bubbled up inside me, but all that came out were scribbles on the page. It was so frustrating. I only lasted half a term of Year 3 before I moved to a school which cared. I was still the most dyslexic, but they understood me.

Now the help I get is incredible. Learning is more fun. I am not scared of going to class. I am not scared of putting my hand up. I don't have the fear of: 'read page 52-53 and answer questions', or the optimistic look around the room for a mate to help you out. I don't have to worry about the worst part: the awkward walk to the front of the room in front of an audience who think I'm a mental kid; who think they're better than me because I have to ask the teacher for help. The teacher who is always taken by surprise and talks too loudly, telling everyone what you are most embarrassed about.

Because of the help Archie Driver gets, he is finally allowed to be me.

Archie Driver, Brighton College, IQ 138

1. Introduction

Most of us take being able to read and write for granted. In fact, it can be difficult to imagine how we would go about our daily lives without literacy skills.

Yet one in ten people in the UK are dyslexic – a disability which can seriously affect the ability to read and write. Dyslexia is nothing to do with intelligence. Winston Churchill was dyslexic. So is Richard Branson.

Not everyone, of course, can become Prime Minister or a successful business leader. But with the right support, those with dyslexia can be helped to overcome their literacy challenges.

The tragedy, however, is that this simply is not happening. In too many cases, either the condition is not identified or pupils fail to get the help they need in the classroom.

Instead children with dyslexia can find themselves written off as stupid or accused of being lazy. Not surprisingly, they all too frequently become demoralised and unhappy. They are more likely to leave without qualifications or be excluded from school.

The consequences can be enormous. In many cases, it can blight lives. Being unable to read or write properly, for example, makes getting and keeping a job much harder. Four out of ten people out of work are dyslexic.

And it is not just the individual who suffers. Society faces huge costs. It has been estimated that, by the age of 37, each illiterate pupil has cost the tax-payer an extra £45,000 through school, unemployment support and the criminal justice system. For the sad fact is that as many as one out of every five people in prison suffer from dyslexia.

We know a great deal more about dyslexia than we did in the past. There have also been improvements in recent years in the teaching of literacy. But when nine out of ten parents with dyslexic children still complain about the lack of support they receive from teachers, it is clear they have not gone far enough.

The Driver Youth Trust, a charity dedicated to improving the life chances of children and young people with literacy problems, commissioned this report to understand why this failure was continuing. The study found that while teachers overwhelmingly thought it important they received training to help teach children with dyslexia, over half revealed they had received no specific training at all. For nine out of ten teachers surveyed, initial training on dyslexia amounted to less than half a day.

Yet giving teachers the skills to help those with dyslexia would benefit all children. Teachers are given a clearer understanding of the process of learning to read and write, and the techniques to support learning right across the classroom.

This report sets out a series of measures which would help tackle the gaps in training and provision. They include providing training for all teachers on special educational needs including dyslexia and ensuring that local authorities identify and support children with the disability from the earliest possible opportunity.

Putting them in place would have not just a life-long impact on individual lives, but also on the strength of our economy and society. When three children in every classroom have dyslexia, we cannot afford to wait any longer for action.

Sarah Driver
Trustee, Driver Youth Trust

What it means to be dyslexic

**Sarah Driver (parent)
and Archie Driver (now 14)**

“When Archie was in Year 1, his teacher told me he often had to get cross with him because he ‘wouldn’t write’. When I questioned the teacher about Archie’s behaviour and contribution in class, he confirmed that Archie was well behaved, full of bright ideas and had a good verbal command of language. I have four children, three of whom are dyslexic, so I had to explain that it wasn’t because he *wouldn’t* write, it was because he *couldn’t* write. Two weeks later the teacher apologised.”

“No teacher in any of Archie’s classes ever understood the issue. They would set him words to spell like ‘blue’, ‘grey’ and ‘white’ because that was what they set in that specific year, never understanding that he still couldn’t spell ‘cat’, ‘mat’ or ‘sat’. By Year 3, Archie was completely demoralised and told us that he was sitting on the ‘dumb’ table. We had to remove Archie from mainstream schooling and with special help, he was able to achieve his potential and return to a highly academic school, Brighton College, at the age of 13. At 14, with a high IQ, he has a reading age of a nine year old. We are lucky and can afford to get him into a school with a specialist dyslexia centre where he has a reader and a scribe for his exams and teachers who are trained and understand the issues. It’s not rocket science. Every ‘Archie’ in this country deserves to be taught in such a way.”

**Alan (an adult dyslexic writer)
and his son Freddie (now at university)**

Alan did not find out he was dyslexic until the age of 50, after both his children were diagnosed. He says:

“I used to get hit [at school] because I made mistakes. I have a great association in my education with making mistakes and failure.”

Alan was frustrated to discover that there is still a lack of understanding of dyslexia when trying to get support for his son Freddie:

“There is still a huge conviction that dyslexia equals no intellect. Teachers have a habit of pigeon holing you – forming an impression of a child and not changing it.” Alan remembers how his son struggled at school: “My son would get home from school at the weekend absolutely exhausted because he had worked so hard. He had black bags under his eyes. Teachers think... he’s not performing, what’s his problem? Not how can we change the way we teach him?”

2. The problem

10% of children in this country are dyslexic¹

For those of us who find it easy to read and write, we can barely remember being taught to do so. It just happened. This makes it very hard to empathise with those who find it difficult. For these people, everyday life in school is a struggle, especially when our formalised system expects children to 'learn to read' by the end of Year 2 and, beyond that, expects them to 'read to learn'. If a child cannot read and write by Year 3, he will be struggling in every class he attends, be it history, maths or science.

One in ten people in this country has a disability which affects their ability to learn to read and write. It is called dyslexia. It does not mean that they are stupid, nor does it necessarily mean that they are clever. It does not mean (as is sometimes claimed) that they are all good at art and design, though many are. It just means that their brains work in a different way.



On average three children in every classroom are dyslexic and struggle with literacy (around 1.2 million children)

Many children with dyslexia, and others who struggle to learn to read and write, are not getting the support they need. Our education system is failing these children. At primary level, where one of the main aims is to teach children to read and write:

- **1 in 8** children in this country fail to master the basics of reading, and
- **1 in 5** fails to master the basics of writing at the end of primary school.²

At secondary level, over a third of young people failed to achieve the expected level of an A+ to C in English in 2011.³

This failure of our education system leads to higher levels of illiteracy in the general population:

- **1 in 6** people in the UK struggle with literacy, with their level being below that expected of an 11 year old.⁴
- **6 million** UK adults are functionally illiterate, meaning they cannot read a medicine bottle, food labels or fill out a job application form.⁵



1/8

children in this country fail to master the basics of reading at the end of primary school



6 million UK adults are functionally illiterate

1/5

fail to master the basics of writing at the end of primary school

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty which affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

Typical features of dyslexia are:⁶

1. Difficulties in '**phonological awareness**'. This means distinguishing the sounds in words including syllables, rhymes and individual letter sounds – a skill underpinning reading and spelling.
2. Difficulties in '**verbal memory**', or remembering the words you hear (for example listening to a teacher in class).
3. Difficulties with '**verbal processing speed**'. This is how quickly you can recognise words and access them from your long term memory.

Dyslexia can affect all aspects of learning, from reading and writing, to maths, memory and concentration. It is described as a spectrum, meaning that it ranges from mild to severe. On average three children in every classroom are dyslexic and struggle with literacy (around 1.2 million children⁷).

Teachers are not trained to identify and support dyslexia

Standard five of the Teachers' Standards⁸ by which teachers are judged, states that a teacher must: "adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils", and in particular:

"have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs... and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them."

There is, however, little guidance available with these standards to help training providers or teachers themselves to understand what this involves.

Therefore, despite this requirement, teachers are not getting the right training and dyslexic children are being failed by our education system. Most teachers do not have a basic understanding of dyslexia. They do not:

- know how to identify children who have dyslexic tendencies
- understand how to help dyslexic children in the classroom
- know when to refer them for further assessment and intervention.

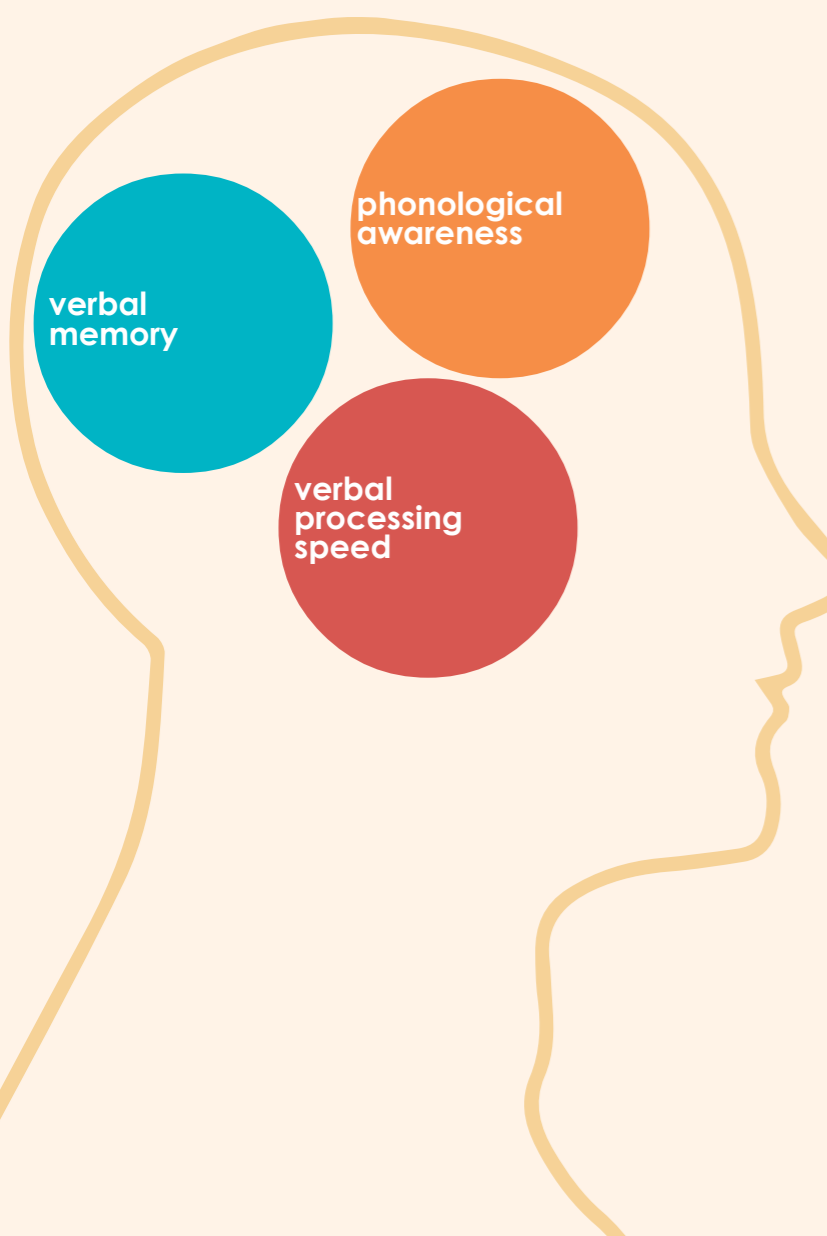
Teachers want this training: 84% of teachers told us it was very important to be trained in teaching children with dyslexia. Teachers are being set up to fail and they need further support.

Having these skills helps teachers teach **all** pupils who struggle with literacy, whatever the reason. For example, it gives teachers a clearer understanding of the process of learning to read and write, and techniques to support learning, including multi-sensory approaches.

There is still much more to be done to support teachers to teach literacy. While a Government survey of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) indicates that training for teachers in how to teach reading has improved slightly in recent years, a third (32%) of NQTs in primary schools still rated their training in teaching children to read as satisfactory or poor.⁹

84%

of teachers told us it was very important to be trained in teaching children with dyslexia



9 out of 10 parents of children with dyslexia say that teachers lack the proper training needed to support their child

Parents struggle to get the right support for their child

The experiences of parents also reinforce these messages. Recent research by Dyslexia Action¹⁰ shows that:

- 9 out of 10 parents of children with dyslexia say that teachers lack the proper training needed to support their child.
- 1 in 9 said that a teacher had made fun of their child's mistakes or wrong answers.

Parents do not necessarily have the skills to know what is wrong and what they should do to support their child. As dyslexia is hereditary¹¹, many parents are likely to be dyslexics themselves. Many believe, at least at first, that if there is a problem, teachers will recognise it and know what to do. They want to work in partnership with teachers to support their child.

In order to obtain support (such as dyslexia specific literacy interventions) or accommodations (such as extra time in exams) local authorities and schools would expect a special assessment to take place at a current cost of approximately £400–£500. These assessments are provided in specialist centres and are not available in schools. However, there is not always financial support available. Only those who can afford it can get the assessment which means that dyslexia has a reputation as a middle class condition.

Some authorities require assessments to be repeated after a mandatory time period has elapsed, despite the fact that dyslexia is something you have for life.

What chance do children with dyslexia have?

There is an unacceptable gap between the achievement of children with dyslexia and their peers.

The Government does not collect separate figures on the attainment of children with dyslexia. They look at children with a 'specific learning difficulty', which includes dyslexia and other similar conditions (such as dyscalculia which means having difficulty with numbers). Latest figures show¹² that only 26% of pupils with a specific learning difficulty (the majority of whom will have dyslexia) achieved the expected level in both English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 in 2010/11, compared to 87% for those with no special educational needs.

For those taking their GCSEs, 51% of those with a specific learning difficulty gained five A*–C grades, compared to 89% of those with no special educational needs.

Dyslexia is not related to IQ. There are many examples of famous successful dyslexic people, from Winston Churchill to Sir Richard Branson.¹³ Therefore, the gap between progress for those with a specific learning difficulty and those without should not be so wide. This is clear evidence that many children with dyslexia are being failed by our education system and are not reaching their full potential.

Dyslexia is a hidden disability

Many children go through their whole education without being diagnosed. Despite often working extremely hard without extra support, they fail to achieve their full potential. They do not understand what their problem is and neither do their parents or their teachers.

Alison (Teaching Assistant, diagnosed with dyslexia in her late 30s)

"In my entire academic career no one had any inkling that I had dyslexia. From very early on I was always labelled as the 'must try harder' child. They said I contributed well in class, but with my homework they would always say 'you can do better than this'."

Alison believes that more needs to be done to raise awareness of dyslexia, particularly in schools: "People need to know about dyslexia. There should be screening for every child so that it is detected early so they don't have to suffer longer than they need to. There needs to be more acceptance of it, more knowledge of how it affects people and how it can be managed. It upsets me that children with dyslexia can have such a negative feeling about themselves, when there is no real reason why they shouldn't flourish."

Jamie Oliver

George Washington

Famous people with dyslexia

Anthony Hopkins

Richard Branson

Walt Disney

Albert Einstein

Whoopi Goldberg

Winston Churchill

Stephen Spielberg

Kirsty Alsopp

Steve Jobs

Keira Knightley

Pablo Picasso

Leonardo Da Vinci

The Every Child a Chance Trust estimated that poor literacy costs annually

2.5bn

4/10

unemployed people are dyslexic

Why does it matter? The economic and social costs

Without a proper focus on the needs of those who struggle to learn to read and write, including those with dyslexia, children will continue to leave full time education without these vital skills. This has a direct economic and social cost.

- Dyslexic children are being deprived of the opportunity to fully engage in their education and achieve their full potential.
- An analysis by the Department for Education showed that pupils who entered secondary school with very low literacy skills had an exclusion rate five times that of pupils who were more able to read and write.¹⁴
- Research by KPMG finds that each illiterate pupil, by the age of 37, has cost the taxpayer an additional £45,000 when you add up extra costs relating to the education system, unemployment support and the criminal justice system.¹⁵

- The Every Child a Chance Trust estimated that poor literacy costs the UK up to £2.5bn per year.¹⁶
- Low levels of literacy obviously make it harder to find employment. One study found 4 out of 10 unemployed people using Jobcentre Plus were dyslexic.¹⁷
- Around half of people in prison struggle with poor literacy (an estimated 52% according to one study which is consistent with previous research) and 1 in 5 people in prison are understood to have dyslexia.¹⁸
- The charity Xtraordinary People has estimated the cost of not providing dyslexia training for teachers at £1.8bn per year.¹⁹

Heather and Alex*

Heather's son Alex always found it difficult to write and to spell. Heather says: "He's a bright boy, but from the moment he got to school, every parents' evening focused on spelling and writing. You get classified as a lazy boy, could try harder. The teachers didn't recognise that there was a problem."

He did his AS levels and "came out white as a sheet". He said: "I think I might be dyslexic" and applied for an assessment at the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, which found he did have dyslexic tendencies.

Heather says: "I didn't realise how much he'd been harbouring it to himself. If we had known when he was younger, it would have made a phenomenal difference. As a parent, you have no understanding of it yourself, how are you able to advocate for your child, and what happens if you come from a family which isn't able to give you that support?"

* names have been changed

52%

of people in prison struggle with literacy

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3. Our research into dyslexia training

About our research

The Driver Youth Trust has undertaken new research on current levels of training for teachers in dyslexia. Two research projects were conducted between June 2012 and February 2013:

- **Provider survey:** A survey of and interviews with initial teacher training (ITT) providers aiming to understand current provision of training in relation to literacy and dyslexia. 54 providers responded to the survey, a response rate of 36%. Seven in-depth interviews were undertaken with teacher training providers.
- **Teacher survey:** A survey of teachers' views on their training and whether it prepares them to teach children who generally struggle with literacy or who are dyslexic. 124 teachers participated in the survey.

The Driver Youth Trust also interviewed the following policy experts:

- Bernadette McLean, Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
- Professor Dame Uta Frith, Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Development, University College London
- Brian Lamb OBE, Chair, Achievement for All
- Baroness Sally Morgan, Chair, Ofsted
- Gill Brackenbury, National and International Inclusive and Special Needs Programme Leader, Institute of Education
- Kate Griggs, Founder, Xtraordinary People

What ITT providers told us

Key findings

Teachers are not currently getting the training they need to support children who struggle to read and write:

- More than a third of teacher training providers (35%) spent less than a day of their courses training teachers how to support children who struggle with literacy.
- Almost a quarter (23%) did not specifically assess their trainees' ability to teach children who struggle with literacy.
- Despite this, 8 out of 10 providers (84%) were satisfied with their training on literacy.

Teachers got even less training in how to identify and support children who are dyslexic:

- 7 out of 10 providers (69%) spent less than a day training students how to support children with dyslexia.
- Nearly a third of providers spent less than half a day teaching teachers about dyslexia.
- Only 18% of providers offered an optional extra module, placement or project on dyslexia or on special educational needs (including dyslexia).
- Despite this 7 out of 10 (65%) were satisfied with their training on dyslexia.

Of those training providers who did offer more than a day's training on dyslexia, many spoke of weaving this within their special educational needs or literacy teaching, so this does not necessarily indicate dedicated time on dyslexia.

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Other strong themes

Limited time for training

ITT providers emphasised the need for more time for training.

“Unfortunately in a one year training course, there is insufficient time to focus on specific difficulties such as dyslexia without simply paying lip service to the issues and possible solutions.”

Learning on the job

Providers felt it was important to look both at initial teacher training and continuous professional development.

“Their [new teachers’] instincts are all about survival in the first year of training. If they got too much training at this early stage, they wouldn’t take it in. We are very aware that when we have finished [their training] it is crucial what happens in the next three years. It would be better if continuous professional development wasn’t left to haphazard choice. We need to re-conceptualize what teacher education really means – so initial teacher education is thought about in the whole of the first three years – so there is structured training through the [next three years]. It shouldn’t just be left to schools to opt in. In some countries there is a requirement to validate your qualification status. You need a valid certificate of continuous professional development in the next few years.”

One teacher training expert we spoke to said: “It is not until teachers start to teach, when they meet children in their classrooms with dyslexia, that they can make use of this kind of training.”

The need for improved resources

Providers felt it would be useful to have further support materials provided by the Teaching Agency to help them design their courses as well as a review of the current materials with a view to improving the content:

“We like the materials produced but the dyslexia ones are not the best examples. They could be reviewed and improved upon.”

A lack of expertise in schools

Providers called for a greater level of understanding of dyslexia in schools in order to support trainees during their placements:

“One of our limiting factors is consistency of high quality provision in school placements.”

One expert interviewed described the dangerous cycle of those with a lack of awareness of dyslexia being responsible for delivering training to others.



The impact of Government teacher training reforms

Current teacher training reforms will see more schools providing their own teacher training. Some respondents were concerned that this would result in a postcode lottery for training:

“The demise of the Graduate Teacher Programme may make things worse because of more decentralisation.”

“[The new] training provision relies on school support. We work with up to 20 different schools, each with its own approach. Consistency is a challenge.”

The Government is also setting up ‘Teaching Schools’. These are existing schools identified as centres of excellence, which will have a key role in school improvement and in the training of new teachers. These 27 schools will have to have special educational needs provision which has been judged ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. One expert we spoke to explained that this does not necessarily mean their provision for dyslexic pupils is adequate:

“[When it comes to special educational needs] there are not enough inspectors who know what ‘good’ looks like.”

Concerns were also raised that current reforms to initial teacher training (including decentralisation, more on the job training and increased subject specialism) could further impact on the time available for dyslexia training and the quality of that training.

Oliver Smith

Oliver, who now teaches students with a range of special educational needs, received very little training on dyslexia during his PGCE in secondary school music. There were some references throughout the course and a one hour lecture delivered by a non specialist lecturer which covered all aspects of special educational needs, in which dyslexia was mentioned. This lecture was quite theoretical, and contained very little practical advice. During his teaching placements there was some on the job experience but no specialist task or mentoring on special educational needs.

Oliver has dyslexia and found out about specialist dyslexia training with the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre. Apart from courses he asked to go on, he received no further training on dyslexia after taking his PGCE.

Oliver says:

“The teacher training of special educational needs is very patchy. Some schools and training providers are excellent but it needs to be compulsory so that all teachers get the right training.

“It’s crucially important for every teacher to be trained in dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties. Every school has dyslexic children in it and the skills you learn, such as multi-sensory teaching, make you a better teacher for all of the children in your classroom.”

What teachers told us

Key findings

In relation to teaching those children who struggle with literacy:

- 60% of teachers we surveyed did not feel satisfied that their initial teacher training provided them with the skills they need to teach those who struggle to learn to read and write.

In relation to teaching children with dyslexia:

- 74% of teachers did not feel satisfied that their initial teacher training provided them with the skills they need to identify and teach children with dyslexia.

Teachers' experiences of their dyslexia training:

- Half (52%) said they had received no training on dyslexia.
- A further 18% had received less than an hour of training.
- 9 out of 10 teachers surveyed had received less than half a day of training on dyslexia.

Teachers want more training on dyslexia:

- 8 out of 10 (84%) teachers thought it was very important that teachers are trained in teaching children with dyslexia. They do not want to be sent into classrooms without the skills they need to teach dyslexic children.

60%

of teachers did not feel satisfied with the training provided

18%

received less than one hour's training on dyslexia

52%

said they received no training on dyslexia

84%

of teachers said they thought it was important that teachers are trained in teaching children with dyslexia

Other strong themes

Teachers feel inadequately prepared

It is clear that many teachers we spoke to had received little or no training on how to identify and support dyslexic children. In fact, many felt inadequately prepared to teach reading and writing, particularly for those who struggle:

“Even though we had a module on reading and writing I didn’t feel overly confident on teaching children how to approach reading and writing especially in Key Stage 1.”

“We did very little on actually teaching the basics, let alone the difficulties many children will have...”

“My training was during the ‘real books’ approach to literacy when children were supposed to learn to read by ‘osmosis’. The training was inadequate in every way.”

A lack of training for secondary school teachers

Secondary school teachers also wanted appropriate training:

“[There is an] assumption on teacher training that all children at Key Stage 3 (Years 7–9) can read and write, which is NOT true.”

“There was no mention of children with literacy difficulties and as I was training to teach biology at secondary level I wrongly assumed that all the students would be able to read and write adequately.”

Teachers spoke of how little time was available for this kind of teaching during their initial teacher training, particularly for secondary school teachers:

“In the PGCE there was little time to teach the basics of how to teach reading and writing, never mind address SEN.”

“Secondary-aged pupils do not let you know when they cannot read. When I know there is a problem I am not sure what resources would help.”

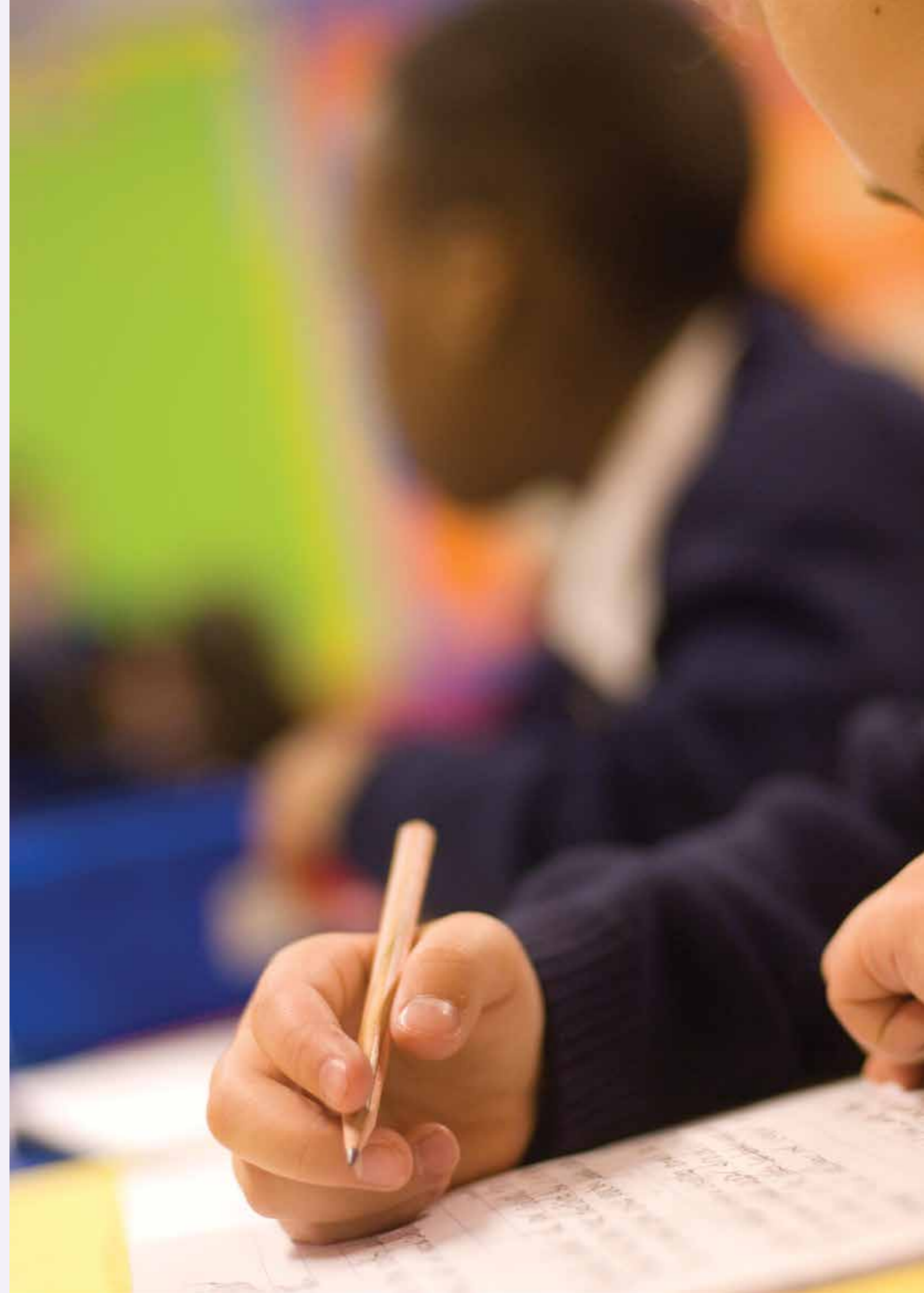
Better training will benefit everyone

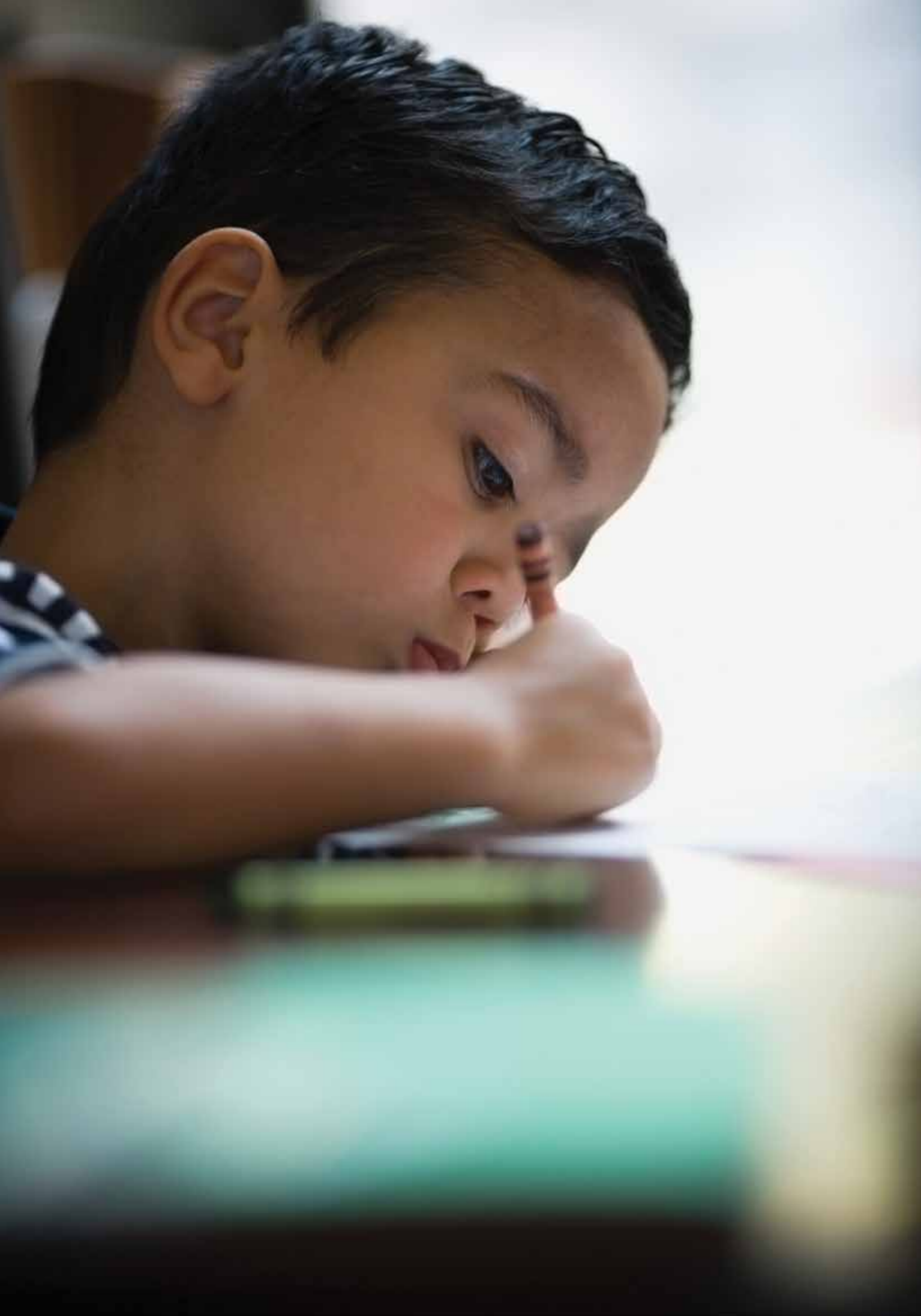
Teachers expressed how vital they felt this training to be:

“Considering there will be dyslexic students in practically every class in the country I think this is crucial.”

“Understanding the learning principles to teach dyslexic learners will improve teaching for all children.”

“I find it outrageous that in this day and age new teachers are still arriving in schools without any training in dyslexia or teaching students with poor literacy.”





4. What is the Government doing?

The Government's response so far

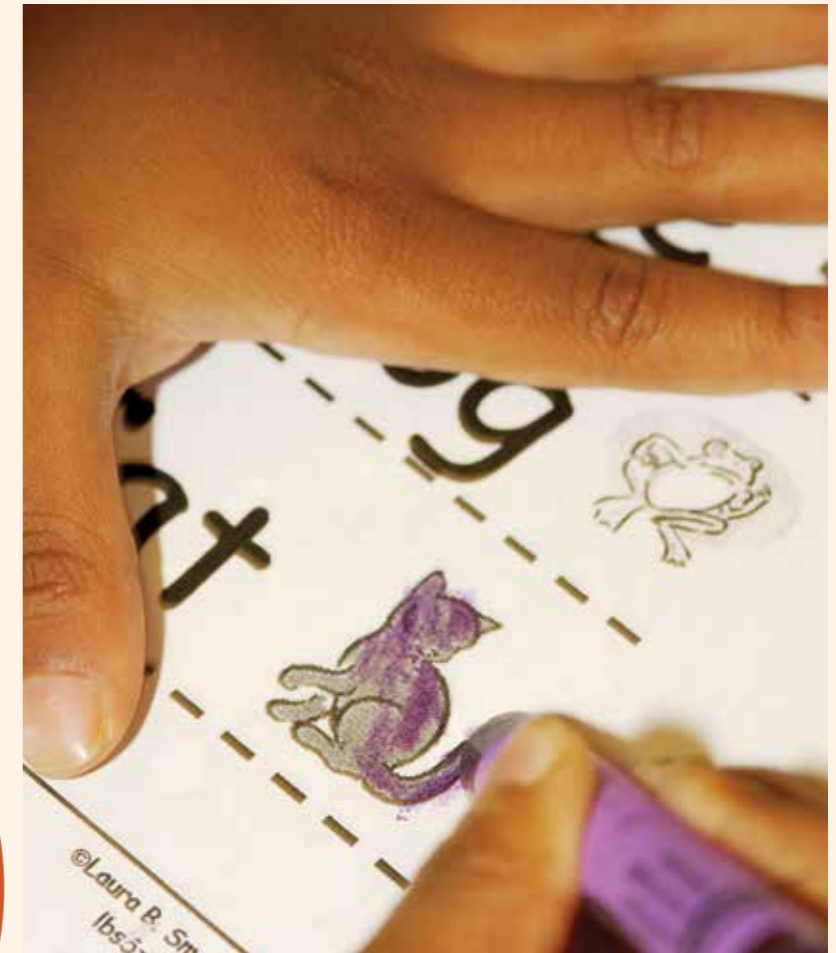
In 2009 the 'No to Failure' project, run by a group of dyslexia charities, published a report highlighting the need for better training for teachers in dyslexia.²⁰ In response, the Government commissioned Jim Rose to conduct a review into dyslexia to make recommendations for change.

The Rose Review²¹ referred to the need for better initial teacher training (ITT) on dyslexia:

"All teachers of beginner readers should have at least a working knowledge of what to look for that suggests a child may be at risk of dyslexia and know where to seek advice on what steps are needed to help them. This working knowledge should be a normal constituent of initial teacher training of those destined to teach beginner readers, and updated through in-service training."

Since the publication of the Rose Review, whilst there have been some positive changes in the teaching of literacy, little progress has been made in relation to improving the training of teachers to support those who struggle with reading, including those with dyslexia.

It is clear that not enough has been done since the Rose Review in 2009 to help identify and support children with dyslexia in this country



The British Dyslexia Association coordinated a petition to ask the Government to introduce mandatory initial teacher training in dyslexia. The Government has recently published its response.²² This recognises that teachers should receive training which meets the new Teachers' Standards, but does not commit the Government to producing guidance for providers to meet these standards.

The Government also states that it has increased the number of trainee placements in special schools to 2,000. However, 38,000 teachers are trained each year,²³ so this is a tiny proportion of all trainee teachers.



In answer to parliamentary questions, Sarah Teather MP (then Minister of State for Children and Families) also set out the Government's current policy on dyslexia.²⁴

• **The answer shows that the Government has so far placed 151 teachers into specialist teacher training through a national scholarship programme, on top of the 3,200 teachers trained following the Rose Review.** With 24,000 schools in the country,²⁵ too few specialist teachers are being trained. Even more worryingly, many of those who have been trained are not in jobs where their skills are being used effectively to help dyslexic children.

• **The answer refers to Government funding for the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust to develop information for parents, schools and local authorities including support for professional development for teachers.** While this work is to be welcomed, there is an immense challenge for the Trust to try to reach every parent and teacher of a dyslexic child in the country so that these children are identified early and given the support they need to succeed. More needs to be done over and above the excellent work of the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust to ensure all teachers receive dyslexia training.

It is clear that not enough has been done since the Rose Review in 2009 to help identify and support children with dyslexia in this country.

Planned SEN reforms in the Children and Families Bill: our concerns

The Government is currently introducing a new law²⁶ which will change the way support is provided to children with special educational needs (SEN).

Teachers need mandatory training on SEN including dyslexia

The initial policy paper outlining the reforms recognised the problem that children with conditions like dyslexia are not currently being identified:

“Children’s needs should be picked up as early as possible, but teachers tell us that they have not always had training to identify children’s needs, or to provide the right help.”²⁷

It is vital we improve our teachers’ ability to support dyslexia

Unfortunately, although 45% of people responding to this Green Paper called for better trained teachers, this has been not been addressed and the new system may actually make the problem worse.

The Government is planning to dismantle the current system of support for those with mild or moderate needs – known as ‘School Action’ and ‘School Action Plus’ – however it is not clear what will be put in its place. There is a real danger that the new system will be focused on those with more severe or easily identified conditions. This would leave schools to manage support for children with less severe needs and hidden disabilities like dyslexia, without appropriate skills or guidance to do so.

Now more than ever, it is vital that we improve our teachers’ ability to identify and support children with dyslexia.

Special educational needs coordinators need better training

Due to the lack of training and support, there are many teachers who feel that they do not have the skills and experience they need to support children with SEN. These teachers currently rely heavily on SENCOs (special educational needs coordinators). Parents, too, expect SENCOs to have the specialist knowledge needed to support their child's learning difficulties.

However, until recently most SENCOs received little or no special training. Even now, the training can be administrative, with little practical advice on how to identify and support children with special educational needs and there is no mandatory minimum level of training on SEN, including dyslexia.

SENCOs: no mandatory minimum level of training on SEN, including dyslexia

Make better use of the Year 1 phonics check

In the area of literacy, the Government has been focused on ensuring that synthetic phonics is systematically taught in schools. However, this process (including the Year 1 phonics check) is a missed opportunity to identify those who struggle with literacy and support them with the right interventions. Good phonics teaching is not enough: teachers need to know how to support children who struggle with literacy in spite of this teaching.

Much more needs to be done to ensure that all teachers can use the Year 1 phonics check as a tool to identify children in their classrooms who struggle with literacy, and then to put the right interventions in place so that every child is provided with the right support to reach his or her full potential. All teachers need to know the simple changes they can make to their teaching and their classroom environment to make it easier for children with dyslexia to learn.

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust has developed guidance for teachers on the Year 1 phonics check and dyslexia²⁸ which should be widely available for teachers to use.

More emphasis on exams will be difficult for dyslexic children

Recent announcements on the reform of GCSEs suggest that the Government favours a move away from continuous assessment and course work with more focus on exams. This could be extremely harmful for children with dyslexia who are not identified. Combined with a widespread lack of awareness about dyslexia as evidenced in this report, such reforms could spell disaster for these children.

We are providing too little, too late

Many children with dyslexia go through school with little or no support and struggle to reach their potential. Only the fortunate few, with supportive teachers or parents who have the means to pay for a specialist dyslexia assessment, reach university. Upon arrival at university, students are invited to have a full assessment of their learning needs, where often dyslexia is identified for the first time. A package of support, including computer software and hours of training, is then awarded. Such help is readily given and is not subject to means testing. In one case, at University of Arts, London, a dyslexic student was given a package of support valued at £3,000.

Such support is welcomed, but clearly will not have as great an impact as support provided when a child starts school and begins to struggle with literacy. £3,000 provided at the beginning of a child's education will have a marked impact on their ability to reach their potential. Moreover, concentrating funding on those lucky enough to reach university means ignoring those who need the most help at primary stage, and who may leave education unable to read and write. How can we get it so wrong?

Many children with dyslexia go through school with little or no support and struggle to reach their potential

5. Recommendations for better dyslexia support

In summary

The Driver Youth Trust has developed a five-point plan to address the need for better identification and support for children with dyslexia:

- 1. Provide mandatory training for all classroom teachers on special educational needs, including dyslexia.**
- 2. Develop guidance and new training resources on teaching children who struggle to read and write and those with dyslexia, to accompany the new Teachers' Standards.**
- 3. Ofsted to investigate how schools support children who struggle to read and write, and whether teachers are getting the right training.**
- 4. The new laws on special educational needs should make sure schools identify and support children with dyslexia, with proper assessment and well trained specialist teachers.**
- 5. The Government should develop a dyslexia and literacy strategy to ensure that children who struggle to read and write get the right support. This should recommend a dyslexia specialist teacher for every school.**

In detail

1. Provide mandatory training for all classroom teachers on special educational needs, including dyslexia.

- 1.1 All initial teacher training (ITT) should include a mandatory module on special educational needs, including dyslexia. This would mean that all teachers are trained to understand dyslexia, its impact on learning and what constitutes dyslexia-friendly practice. Teachers should be aware of when to signpost learners for assessment and when to provide appropriate intervention. This could form part of a wider emphasis on training teachers in how to support those who struggle with literacy.
- 1.2 All ITT providers should be required to have a tutor with specific responsibility for training teachers on special educational needs.
- 1.3 As outlined in the recent ITT strategy, the Teaching Agency is currently continuing with work to improve teacher training. As part of this work, the Teaching Agency should look to ensure that ITT providers train teachers in best practice for children who struggle with literacy and those with dyslexia. One mechanism to ensure this happens would be the funding allocations for training providers. For example, at present, schools involved in training teachers through the new 'school direct' programme are entitled to certain premiums, such as a 10% funding premium for schools with 35% or more of their pupils on free school meals. One mechanism to encourage better training provision would be to develop a similar funding premium for schools which can demonstrate that they provide good training on SEN, including dyslexia.

- 1.4 All trainee teachers should complete a mandatory special educational needs placement. This would not be an overly burdensome requirement, as it could be in a special or a mainstream school. It must include a specific task, which allows a trainee to explore SEN issues more deeply, for example: identifying a child with dyslexia, researching this condition, understanding their individual support needs, discussing their support with their classroom teacher and the school's SENCO, and compiling a report of the placement.

- 1.5 There should be a review of resources available to ITT providers on dyslexia to help them design their courses, particularly in the light of the new standards for Qualified Teacher Status. This would impact on the quality as well as the quantity of training in this area. The review should include the content of training but also cover whether or not providers are actually using these resources to help them design their courses. The review should consider whether the use of any resources should be mandatory. This is vital as previous resources have not necessarily been taken up by ITT providers. A Warwick University report²⁹ found that only 3 in 10 trainee teachers surveyed were aware of the then Teaching Development Agency's toolkit on SEN and disability, and 42% of these had not covered it in their course. One option to fund a review of resources would be to seek sponsorship from an information technology or publishing company, similar to the British Telecom sponsorship of speech and language resources.

- 1.6 Continuous professional development (CPD): The Government should consider a new strategy for initial teacher training and teacher induction, covering the first three years of a teacher's career, moving away from the idea that once a teacher has completed their initial training and NQT year they are fully equipped to teach all pupils to a high standard. This would allow for teachers to get training in areas like dyslexia in the right amount of detail at the right time for them, with the right balance of theoretical education and on the job training in schools. The strategy should consider the idea of 'chartered teacher' status – a prestigious award which would be granted to teachers who obtained prescribed further training and assessment after their ITT. Such a status would incentivise teachers and school leaders to prioritise continuous professional development training. The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust has developed a framework for individual CPD and whole school improvement, which could form the basis of mandatory dyslexia training for CPD. Specialist teacher qualifications in dyslexia should also form part of the portfolio for such chartered status.

Case study: A leading edge initial teacher training programme

ARK Schools is a group of 18 academies. The group works in partnership with outstanding university providers to deliver a leading edge initial teacher training programme. This includes:

- A summer induction course.
- Ongoing core training and personalised support from a university tutor throughout the year.
- Regular observation and individualised subject training from a school mentor.
- Additional training and support from network specialists, helping trainees to exceed expectations of the Teachers' Standards for behaviour, literacy, numeracy and SEN.
- Continuous professional development for all successful trainees taking up positions in ARK schools. This involves further training in SEN, including dyslexia.

The ITT programme includes a six session module on special educational needs, one session of which is dedicated to literacy difficulties and dyslexia. This is devised and led by experts in the ARK network inclusion team, including a dyslexia specialist funded through the Driver Youth Trust.

2. Develop guidance and new training resources on teaching children who struggle to read and write and those with dyslexia, to accompany the new Teachers' Standards.

2.1 The new Teachers' Standards³⁰ highlight the importance of promoting high standards of literacy (see standard 3) and an understanding of the requirements of children with special educational needs (see standard 5). There should be clear guidance to accompany these standards to ensure those developing initial teacher training and induction courses include an understanding of dyslexia in their programmes.

3. Ofsted to investigate how schools support children who struggle to read and write, and whether teachers are getting the right training.

3.1 As part of the new framework for inspection of initial teacher training, Ofsted should undertake a new investigation into the provision of training in how to support children who struggle with literacy and those with dyslexia. Ofsted should also undertake an investigation into current provision in schools, particularly as part of its overview of how schools are spending their pupil premium. As part of this work, Ofsted should ensure that inspectors are trained to understand how to identify quality provision for those who struggle with literacy and those with dyslexia.

4. The new laws on special educational needs should make sure schools identify and support children with dyslexia, with proper assessment and well trained specialist teachers.

4.1 Current changes to SEN policy provide an opportunity to revolutionise the identification and support of children with dyslexia in our schools. There is a real danger, however, that the reforms will make matters worse, by focusing too much on those with severe needs, and leaving schools to cope with those children who are not on statements and who have 'hidden disabilities' like dyslexia without the expertise or guidance to support these children appropriately. It is essential that new guidance on the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs, outlined in the Special Educational Needs Green Paper, should be based on latest research and evidence of best practice on identification and support of those with dyslexia.

4.2 The Driver Youth Trust believes that schools should be required to publish attainment levels for all SEN pupils, including those with dyslexia, and set out proposals for improving levels of attainment. Similarly, in the new legislation, the Secretary of State should be required to publish levels of attainment for children with dyslexia at a national level, along with a strategy for improvement in this area.

4.3 Local authorities will be publishing 'local offers' of their SEN provision. All such offers should include specific reference to dyslexia. Local authorities should assess current provision in their schools, identify and meet service and training needs, share best practice amongst local schools and publish details of the specialist support they will provide.

5. The Government should develop a dyslexia and literacy strategy to ensure that children who struggle to read and write get the right support. This should recommend a dyslexia specialist teacher for every school.

5.1 The Government should develop a dyslexia and literacy strategy. The aim would be to ensure that all children with dyslexia, or who struggle with literacy, are identified (potentially through the Year 1 phonics check and/or through Key Stage 2 assessments) and provided with the right interventions to support them to learn to read and write. As part of this strategy the Department for Education should publish a guide to approved programmes for catch up literacy interventions based on the best available evidence (such as that undertaken by Greg Brooks³¹), so that schools have easy access to the best interventions. The strategy should cover literacy support in primary and secondary education. It should consider whether current policy achieves the best value for money in improving the educational attainment of children with dyslexia. For example, there is less value in providing an abundance of expensive support for someone who is assessed as having dyslexia at university than in identifying that child in primary school or earlier and getting them the right support before they begin to fall behind.

5.2 The strategy should recommend a dyslexia specialist trained teacher working in every school (or cluster of schools for very small schools) to provide the knowledge and skills to be able to set up early identification procedures for children with dyslexia, train classroom teachers and teaching assistants, and ensure children who struggle with literacy get the right interventions. These teachers should be responsible for coordinating literacy interventions delivered by teachers and teaching assistants. Ideally, they should be trained to a level where they can assess pupils, thereby avoiding the need for costly private assessments. They should also have the time to work directly with children so that their skills can make a difference to children with dyslexia. They should not simply be in administrative roles. Specific training should also be made available from specialist teachers for school leadership teams, SENCOs, Governors and, where appropriate, local authority staff.

5.3 The strategy should recommend mandatory training for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs). It is essential that SENCOs receive appropriate training. The current training is often administrative, with very little practical advice on how to support children, and there is no mandatory specialist training on dyslexia. We are calling for a review of training for SENCOs, and stronger requirements in regulations for all SENCOs to have high quality, specialist training in the latest research and evidence of best practice on identification and support of those with dyslexia.

**Case study:
A holistic approach
to improving literacy**

ARK Schools is working in partnership with the Driver Youth Trust on 'Drive for Literacy', a project to support children who struggle with literacy, including those with dyslexia, across the ARK Schools network.

The project aims to ensure that all pupils within ARK schools who struggle to read and write are supported to improve their literacy skills and to be able to access the rest of the curriculum, so that their literacy problems are not a barrier to further learning. This involves:

- Whole school training for teachers and teaching assistants in the identification and support of children with literacy difficulties and dyslexia, and access to guidance from specialist personnel.
- Early identification of children with literacy problems and those with dyslexia and co-occurring difficulties.
- Effective, evidence-based interventions.
- Regular and informative assessment of all children.
- Emphasis on quality teaching based on a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics and strong reading comprehension.
- Dissemination of guidance on appropriate learning environments.
- Identification and dissemination of good practice within and from outside the ARK network.
- Parental and pupil involvement, so that learning can be supported at home.
- Effective use of new technologies.
- Good access to age-appropriate literature to maintain an emphasis on reading for pleasure.

The Drive for Literacy benefits from specialist advice and consultancy provided by the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre. During the first year of the Drive for Literacy programme over 200 members of staff have accessed some form of inset or training on dyslexia, and more than 300 pupils have been screened or provided with detailed literacy assessments.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: "It has changed what I do by making me think differently about how I support pupils."

One parent writes: "The dyslexia screener report confirmed what I had known all along. I feel now that the teachers understand her needs more and having one to one help from a specialist teacher has helped restore her confidence. She still doesn't like reading but she is more likely to have a go now. She has begun to learn some spellings that she has always struggled with. I hope she continues to get the support she has had over the last year throughout her schooling."

**"It has changed
what I do by
making me think
differently about
how I support
pupils."**



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