

## **Dyslexia and literacy difficulties - Information for parents**

### **What is dyslexia?**

There has been much research into dyslexia and there are many different explanations for literacy difficulties, none of which has universal agreement. Research suggests that there is no identified difference between children who have 'literacy difficulties' and those who have 'dyslexia'.

In Haringey, we advocate the definition of dyslexia proposed by The Rose Report (2009) which states that, 'Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling...It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.' We therefore prefer the description 'has needs on the dyslexia continuum'.

### **How do schools support children with literacy difficulties?**

When a child or young person is not making expected progress with their literacy skills, teachers will carry out assessments in areas including phonological awareness, phonics, reading accuracy, reading fluency, reading comprehension, spelling and writing in order to identify the specific areas of literacy that need improving. They can then make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum and classroom environment and put interventions in place to target any areas of difficulty.

### **Does my child need a diagnosis or 'label' of dyslexia?**

It is not necessary to have a label or formal diagnosis in order for a child to access appropriate interventions in school. Having a label of dyslexia will not, in itself, affect the interventions available or give children access to special exam arrangements. For some children, understanding that their needs are on the dyslexia continuum can help them and their families understand why they find aspects of literacy difficult.

Suitably trained teachers should undertake an assessment of children's literacy in school. Assessment is not a one-off event but should happen over time; it should identify strengths and areas of difficulty and should use a structured 'assessment through teaching' approach to inform interventions and strategies.

Where appropriate, schools can request support from the Educational Psychology Service to help identify a child's strengths and needs, inform intervention and monitor progress. This may be particularly appropriate if a child presents with complex needs.

### **What can parents/carers do to support their child?**

Parents can help with their child's literacy development by: supporting interventions put in place by the school; reading 'to' and 'with' their child; helping their child practise skills 'little and often' and making it enjoyable; providing their child with access to a range of books e.g. audio books, e-readers with a text-to-speech function and age appropriate simpler texts (available from libraries)