



Information for parents

The Essex approach to teaching pupils with literacy difficulties

This information leaflet has been co-created by Essex parents and Local Authority SEND professionals (Special Educational Needs and Disability teams).

Our aim

For all children and young people in Essex to:

- have high quality literacy teaching;
- have their individual needs identified and met early on, if they have literacy difficulties despite appropriate learning opportunities;
- get the help they need to make progress in literacy.

What can I do if I'm worried about my child's reading or spelling/writing progress?

Talk to your child to find out what they are finding difficult.

Talk to your child's class teacher or form tutor. Some useful questions might be:

- *How does the school measure skills and progress in literacy?*
- *How is my child doing?*
- *What can the school do to help if my child is struggling?*
- *What can I do to help if my child is struggling?*

If their skills/progress do not improve over time, you could ask:

- *Does my child have special educational needs?*
- *What information and assessment information do school use to decide this?*

Look on the school's website at their SEND information.

You can ask to talk to the school's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) to find out more. There are various assessments that schools can use to analyse a pupil's literacy difficulties in detail - Essex LA has a list of Recommended Assessments for Identifying the Needs of Pupils with SEND.

The results should be used to decide if the pupil needs extra help to make progress, and if so, what type of help. Examples of evidence-based literacy interventions are given in the Essex Provision Guidance Toolkit, an online resource for schools, which you could look at and talk to staff about.

Essex SENDIASS (independent and confidential SEND Information, Advice and Support Service for parents) is available to help parents/carers access appropriate advice and support in all areas of SEND (Tel: 03330 138913 or email send.iass@essex.gov.uk).

What should my child's school be doing?

- All schools need to make sure they use effective teaching, assessment and intervention for literacy.
- Detailed assessment and research-based interventions should be used in schools as early as possible, and continue, to help any pupil who has literacy difficulties, whatever terms are used to describe their difficulties.

What about dyslexia?

- We want to make sure that all pupils get the help they need, rather than subcategorising children and young people, so that some get help and others don't, e.g. depending on whether or not they have certain patterns of difficulties, or certain words are used to describe their needs (such as dyslexia), or their parents have paid for a particular assessment.
- Scientifically, there is no difference between what some people call 'dyslexia' and other people call 'severe and persistent literacy difficulties', or other terms. There isn't an agreed assessment pathway for 'dyslexia', or different interventions that are needed for pupils if their literacy difficulties are described as dyslexia.
- Essex LA is committed to providing the right help to children regardless of how their needs are described.
- If your child is struggling with literacy, the most important thing is that we work out what they can't yet do and help them to learn it.

What about extra time/help for exams?

- Any assessments that are used for access arrangements (e.g. extra time or support in tests/exams) must be arranged by the school SENCO. Any other reports cannot be used for this purpose.

Other FAQs

- For more detailed answers to some other Frequently Asked Questions from parents, please see the last section of the Literacy Difficulties Practice Guidance described below.
- These FAQs are also available as a separate information leaflet for parents.

To support best practice in schools...

- Essex Local Authority (LA) has developed some guidance called "Teaching pupils with literacy difficulties: Practice Guidance for Essex Schools". This has been written in consultation with Essex schools and parents. It is based on up-to-date research about how children learn literacy skills, and on the SEND Code of Practice (2015). Your child's school can give you a copy of this or signpost you to it.
- The LA regularly provides free training to all Essex schools about the Practice Guidance, and how to put it in place in their school. All schools are encouraged to attend.
- Essex LA SEND professionals are continuing to support all schools to develop their literacy teaching, including for those pupils who have literacy difficulties.

What does the Practice Guidance say?

In summary, it covers:

- how schools should put in place High Quality Teaching so all pupils can access lessons confidently;
- how schools should assess all pupils' attainment and progress;
- how schools should assess a pupil's literacy skills in detail, early on, if their attainment and progress is less than expected. Assessment should be carried out over time;
- how schools should use teaching approaches that research tells us are effective;
- how schools should put in place interventions (teaching activities to improve progress) that target what the pupil needs to learn. These need to be interventions that research tells us are effective;
- how schools should follow the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process given in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) for literacy needs;
- how schools should work with parents/carers;
- how schools should work with external support services such as Essex Educational Psychologists and Inclusion Partners;
- how schools should help pupils who have severe and persistent literacy difficulties (SPLD);
- FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) that parents ask schools.

Please have a look the Literacy Difficulties Practice Guidance if you would like to find out more.