ABBOTSHOLME SCHOOL

Abbotsholme School Learning Skills policy

Abbotsholme School aims to provide a 'whole person' approach to education. It believes we should give pupils a good start in life and prepare them for their next steps in life, whatever those may be. Consequently there is a whole school approach to specific learning differences. Pupils are fully integrated into everyday life and lessons. Staff are aware of their needs and difficulties and make appropriate allowances. The specialist department provides help on a small group basis to any pupil who has special educational needs. The aim is to assist the pupil, whether dyslexic, dyscalculic, dyspraxic, with other specific learning differences or a diagnosis of ASD or ADHD/ADD to realise his/her full potential. The use of this term gives a much more positive view of the child concerned and places the focus of remediation in the classroom. The co-morbidity of dyslexia with other learning differences means that we support pupils who may also have dyscalculia, dyspraxia, auditory processing disorder or specific language impairment for example.

The majority of the pupils we support are dyslexic. Dyslexia is a learning difference, a combination of strengths and weaknesses which affects the learning process in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy. Dyslexic learners may also have accompanying weaknesses in short term memory, sequencing and the speed at which they process information. These are skills that everyone needs if they are to learn effectively in a busy classroom. They are also key skills for life.

Staff are always encouraged to seek advice about possible referrals to the department. If we acknowledge that our children are learning differently rather than that they have a difficulty, we place the emphasis on how all lessons are planned, resourced and taught. Good multi-sensory teaching is accessible to all. It improves the learning of all pupils, not just those who learn differently.

Even though the pupil does learn differently, that pupil may still have a persistent difficulty, for example when their oral work is not reflected in their written work. As specific learning differences are constitutional in origin, teaching 'harder' will not change this; teaching differently will. We need to remember, 'if they don't learn the way we teach them, we must teach them the way they learn.'

There is no stigma attached to having a Specific Learning Difference at Abbotsholme. In line with the school's ethos, we look to the strengths in our pupils, so self-esteem and confidence are raised accordingly.

Support is provided in small group or in rare cases individual classes. If withdrawal is needed it is generally from one or both languages or by reducing options in Years 10 and 11.

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Within the department there is a strong focus on literacy as this underpins learning in all subjects. Teaching strategies encompass a highly structured, sequential, multi-sensory programme utilising a well-resourced area. Support is provided from entry through GCSE to A Level.

The specialised lessons are held in the normal school day with possible withdrawal in Senior School from French and/or Spanish. Prep School pupils are taught at times agreed with the Prep School staff. Where possible the younger pupils are taught early in the day when they are most receptive. Specialised teaching in small groups allows for peer interaction, group dynamics and a small amount of competition. It also gives a group feeling and a sense of protection. Individual help is given in areas of especial difficulty, where the pupil needs to be more secure in themselves or where the help is more subject oriented.

On occasions, lessons that have been planned will be set aside in order to help with or to solve a crisis that is stopping a pupil from learning. We believe the department and its staff are a refuge in times of stress. A very important role of the department is increasing the self-confidence of the child.

There is strong communication between the members of the department and the rest of the staff. The Department makes information available about each pupil's strengths and weaknesses via the PASS system. Staff are encouraged to provide their observations too so that information is shared. Each term members of staff receive a list of all the pupils with specific learning differences. Opportunities are available at the beginning of term, in weekly briefings and via direct contact for members of staff to express concerns about a pupil. Staff are also encouraged to seek advice if they have worries about a pupil's learning and to also make referrals for assessment.

Specific Learning Differences Skills Development

The aim of the department is to develop the pupils' skills in all areas of life, to teach the integration of skills and foster the ability to learn independently so each pupil achieves to their potential. The aim of the structured programmes is to teach:

- The skills of literacy: language, memory and handwriting.
- The basic skills of mathematics
- The skills of organisation: personal and work, and so create strategies for independent learning and in doing so, raise self-image and belief in themselves.

By doing this we aim to encourage the pupil to think carefully and employ the above skills in all areas of life.

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Objectives

The ultimate objective of the department is to assist the pupils to reach their full potential. In order to succeed, each pupil needs a highly structured, multi-sensory programme specifically geared to their individual needs.

The small group teaching builds confidence by allowing the pupil to experience success as they move through the programme. It is pupil directed work and the aim is for them to learn that success comes with their own efforts and practice. Learning should be an active process. As pupils progress through the school, greater emphasis is placed on organisational skills and examination techniques. At key stage 4 and 5, the lessons are more tutorial in style. More complex study skills, note making and help with GCSE work occurs, examination skills and revision strategies are introduced. To implement these strategies effectively, internal assessment takes place on a regular basis and external assessment by an Educational Psychologist is recommended as appropriate.

Management of the pupils is by individual/group plans and progress is monitored regularly and targets set at least termly.

All pupils may visit the department at any time if they need assistance. There will always be help available.

If a pupil has difficulties in any area of the curriculum they can usually be dealt with by a member of the department, by liaison with the subject teacher or in special circumstances by a member of the department sitting in class.

Teaching Provision

The teaching provision is multi-sensory, structured, thorough, active, relevant, cumulative and sequential with a lot of over learning. The multi-sensory aim is to use the stronger channel to support the weaker, while training the weaker. The multi-sensory techniques are used for practising handwriting, reading and spelling, for creative and continuous writing, for the development of memory and later on for revision, essay writing and project work. They are also used to improve confidence in mathematical concepts where working from the concrete and progressing onto more abstract forms of mathematics is beneficial.

Work is always positive and the idea of working together is very important. This is aided by the senior pupils in school who still have lessons and who 'pop in' when they are stuck. All this boosts the confidence of the younger pupils who become less afraid of making mistakes.

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Marking is also carried out in a positive manner; it is a joint process whenever possible. Oral correction is easier to take and more fruitful. Words, rules, maths etc. that have been taught are expected to be correct or to be self-corrected. Things that are too difficult are corrected for the pupil or underlined and explained.

The department is flexible and skilled in many areas of the curriculum and uses these skills to help the progress of the pupils.

Assessments and progress reviews are held regularly. Pupils with external examinations will be assessed and access arrangements applied for as appropriate. There are several visiting 'experts' who come into the department such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists so no one feels different when this occurs.

Marking and Record Keeping

An Individual Plan is devised at the beginning of each academic year and an initial term's plan is devised. Pupils are given a weekly record and task target sheet that is kept in their file. Staff should ensure the pupils keep this up to date and that relevant comments are added to it as appropriate. These are reviewed at least termly to ensure problems are being solved and targets achieved.

The department uses both formal and informal methods of assessment; these form part of the daily teaching and learning process and the outcome of these can modify the teaching approach and programme as well as inform progress.

The use of assessment allows the development of a positive self-image and success, which encourages the pupil to progress further. This is essential when dealing with pupils with a learning difficulty.

Marking of work should be carried out with the pupil present. Work which the pupil is expected to know should be positively marked or underlined / discussed for correction. If the work is beyond the pupil's level it should be corrected, explained or ignored as appropriate. A comment like good, well done, excellent should be written. If the pupil has obviously tried but made far too many mistakes and not achieved success, give no mark but find something to praise and reassess the level of the work and re-teach. Assessment is important in building a picture of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses and allows a more positive programme to develop.

The nature of specialist teaching means that differentiation occurs naturally.

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Resources

The literacy resources are built around the Gillingham – Stillman, Hickey, Bangor, Hornsby and Dyslexia Action schemes along with Units of Sound, Lifeboat and Beat Dyslexia. The mathematics is based around hands on work following the four rules. Early skills are developed via the Power of Two programme, Stile Maths, Maths Base and Smart Numeracy.

The department is very well resourced both with bought and self-generated materials. There are worksheets and resources to support all aspects of the programme. These include games, readers and software. Staff are encouraged to develop more resources as dictated by the needs of the pupils.

ICT use

The Code of Practice directs the use of ICT in addressing the assessment and identification of Special Educational needs. It also emphasises the need to have access to ICT as a means of supporting their Special Educational Needs. In developing the use of ICT, the department consults with the School's ICT department.

Pupils with SpLD benefit from the use of iPads and computers both as a tool for expression and as an aid to learning. The computer allows a pupil to demonstrate how good they are at working within this medium. It allows a teacher to build on strengths and weaknesses of a pupil and appropriate software motivates a student and can often show another aspect of a topic. Computers allow the production of well-presented work. Work can be typed, strategies developed and these can be printed out, reviewed and improved in a short time. They are an excellent help in improving hand-eye co-ordination and sequencing.

The department uses computers for word processing and touch typing and as tools to help pupils develop specific numeracy and literacy problems. They are also used as a means of testing pupils e.g. Lucid Exact.

It is felt however, that pupils should still be encouraged to master handwriting skills as best as possible. There will always be situations where word processing is not possible/appropriate so pupils are may need to make their written work as clear as possible e.g. in Maths.

External Examinations

Examinations present one of the most demanding tasks for pupils with SpLD. All pupils with a SpLD who qualify are eligible for concessions with public examinations. The concessions

available depend on their difficulties and the regulations of the Examination Boards. This help varies from 25% extra time to readers, amanuensis, room alone, rest breaks, prompter and ability to use a word processor.

In the latter part of Year 9, a member of the department assesses pupils. The result of their tests along with previous history is sent to the board as an application for concessions. Access arrangements will then be implemented for internal exams and tests as well in order to establish normal way of working.

Our Pupils' Voice

The pupils who attend Learning Skills lessons are usually acutely aware of what constitutes good teaching strategies for 'dyslexic' pupils and also what may present barriers to their learning. They have the confidence to approach Learning Skills staff when mediation may be required. Once the situation is talked through, the Head of the Department will take the decision to perhaps speak to the subject teacher directly, or to send a general request to all staff to highlight the pupil's concerns. This may be a request to speak more slowly, or to allow time to finish work, explain in a different way and so on. Where possible, we support the children in approaching members of staff themselves.

Admissions Policy

The school requires that all prospective pupils to the Senior school and Prep school attend a 'taster day'. During this day, English and Mathematics standardised tests are administered. If a pupil has a SpLD, this day will include a detailed assessment with a member of the department. Where it is clear that a pupil has ability but performance is being marred by SpLD the school exercises its discretion as to the standard required.

If a pupil has already been diagnosed as having SpLD, copies of the Educational Psychologist or specialist teacher's reports are requested. All this information allows an informed decision to be made. Parents are encouraged to provide an up to date report on entry.

Assessment and Review Arrangements

Pupils who have an identified special educational need are assessed as early and as thoroughly as possible. Pupil referral may also come once they have entered the school. This may be through a subject teacher, the pupil or parental request. Early identification, assessment and provision is very important.

- It can minimise difficulties that can be encountered
- Maximise positive response

- Allow for a temporary learning difficulty to be overcome and for future learning to be unaffected
- Allows for referral to outside agencies

When pupils enter the school all those identified as having a specific learning difficulty will attend lessons in the department or their progress may be monitored if it is felt they do not require regular support lessons. They will have been given a battery of tests in the department on their 'taster' day, but if for any reason this did not take place, testing will occur as soon as possible. The battery includes tests of non-verbal ability, reading, reading comprehension, phonological ability and spelling. The results of these as well as Educational Psychologist Reports allow the planning of the pupil's support programme and suggest if further diagnostic tests are necessary. During their school career, pupils are regularly tested to ensure progress and allow continuing revision of their individual programme. There is also specific testing before external examinations.

S.E.N. Code of Practice (2014)

Provides a model for pupils who are without a statement. The aim is to match the nature of the child's needs and record progress. The code provides for a graduated response and recommends that schools make full use of school and classroom resources. More specialised help should be brought in where the child's difficulties make this necessary. Teachers should be planning lessons and work with consideration for the individual needs of all pupils and providing differentiated work.

1. Monitoring in class
   a. Teachers monitor progress of pupils they have concerns about.
   b. Support provided through differentiation by the subject teacher.

2. Specialised support
   Lessons provided in the Learning Skills department extra to or different from that which the school gives through usual differentiated teaching.

3. Additional support required
   Consultation with outside specialists when a child needs more help than is normally provided at school. This may include speech and language or occupational therapy etc.

4. EHC Plan
   Support is provided in accordance with the EHC plan.

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EHC plans

Abbotsholme has a limited number of pupils with an EHC plan from an LEA. These pupils are admitted to the school after careful consideration to ensure the needs of the pupil and the requirements of the plan can be met. The pupil needs to take full part in the Abbotsholme curriculum.
All pupils will have targets set at the annual review in conjunction with the LEA and parents. The review will focus on what the pupil has achieved as well as the difficulties that need addressing. The annual review at Year 6, 9, 11 will focus on transition to the next stage of education.