



# The Abbey

The independent school for girls aged 3-18.

## Policy on Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties

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The Abbey School



17 Kendrick Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5DZ  
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Registered Charity No 309115. The Abbey School exists to educate academically able girls.



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## 1 Aims

- 1.1 The aims of this policy are to promote good practice in our detection and management of special educational needs and to explain the support we can provide for children who have learning difficulties and the co-operation we will need from parents.
- 1.2 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format, if required.

## 2 "Special educational needs" and "learning difficulty"

- 2.1 Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
- 2.2 Children have a learning difficulty if they:
  - 2.2.1 have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
  - 2.2.2 have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post 16 institutions (if your child has a disability, please ask to see our Disability policy);
  - 2.2.3 are under five and fall within the definition at 2.2.1 or 2.2.2 above or are likely to do so do when of compulsory school age if special educational provision was not made for the child.
- 2.3 A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the *language or (form of language) in which she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been spoken at home.* (section 20 (4) Children and Families Act 2014). However, children for whom English is an additional language will be provided with appropriate support where we observe that their learning is being impacted provided they meet the School's academic criteria. Please refer to the School's policy for pupils with English as an additional language.
- 2.4 A child who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a "learning difficulty" in the legal sense of that expression; there will often be disparities in the speed with which children learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen.
- 2.5 The expression "learning difficulty" covers a wide variety of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The expression may also include those who have problems with their eyesight or hearing or who have an autistic spectrum disorder.
- 2.6 Learning difficulties may affect children who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and ability. Sometimes a child's learning difficulty becomes apparent for the first time at the age of 11+ or older, when the educational pressures tend to increase.

## 3 Policy statement

- 3.1 **The School:** The Abbey is a mainstream independent school with high academic standards which accepts girls from the age of three years. Even so, we use a range of appropriate screening and assessment tools; in order to detect signs of learning difficulties. These include:

- Evidence obtained by teacher observation/formative assessment;
- Summative assessment data (to include Entrance Examination results in our Senior School, internal and external exam results)
- Information from parents, including Educational Psychologist reports;
- Records from feeder schools;
- Screening /diagnostic tests;

We believe support of learning should be fluid, timely and open to all in order to maximise progression for our pupils. We aspire to enable this through regular, open communication between classroom teachers, the SENDCO and the support of learning teachers, together with feedback from parents and pupils. We aim for support of girls' learning to occur, as much as possible, within the classroom.

To implement the 'graduated approach' to students identified as having learning difficulties as set out in the Code of Practice 2014.

In identifying a child as needing SEND support the teacher, working with the SENCO and Support of Learning Teachers, will carry out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs. This should draw on the teacher's assessment and experience of the pupil, their previous progress and attainment, as well as information from The Abbey's core approach to pupil progress and attainment. This assessment will be reviewed regularly. Where necessary the school may support parents in contacting outside agencies for further assessment.

- 3.2 **Provision:** In our Junior School, all teachers and teaching assistants who work with the pupil will be made aware of their needs, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required. Support is timetabled accordingly. We aim for support of girls' learning to occur, as much as possible, within the classroom. The impact and quality of the support will be evaluated regularly, through meetings with teachers and termly assessments.

In our Senior School, the provision which we can make for children who appear to have a learning difficulty includes: support of learning, additional specialist teaching, and referral to our own Access Arrangements assessor or where appropriate to an educational psychologist for a formal assessment.

- 3.3 **Consultation:** We will do all that is reasonable to report and consult with parents about their child's learning difficulties and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a child's learning difficulties and that teaching practices are appropriate.

#### 4 **Implementation and procedures**

- 4.1 **Screening test:** Where appropriate we offer a range of screening tests and the tests which we use are not diagnostic tests of a kind which an educational psychologist would carry out, and they are not infallible. The purpose of the tests is to detect circumstances which may need further investigation or a formal assessment.
- 4.2 **Outcome of tests:** If the outcome of a test or any other circumstances give us reason to think that your child may have a learning difficulty, we will report and consult with you as necessary and make recommendations.
- 4.3 **Formal assessment:** If the test results indicate that your child may have a learning difficulty which ought to be assessed without delay, we may ask you to agree to your child being formally assessed by an educational psychologist. You may consult an educational psychologist suggested by the School, or one of your own choice.

However, any educational psychologist should incorporate school based evidence as part of their assessment, particularly if there is a need to justify Access Arrangements for external examinations in our Senior School. The cost in either case must be borne by the parents.

- 4.4 **Additional specialist teaching:** As an alternative, and if justified by the test results, in our Senior School we may suggest a course of additional specialist teaching by a qualified specialist on a one-to-one basis in school. Such intervention is rare in our Junior School, or may be offered as a short, focused intervention.
- 4.5 **Learning support:** Where appropriate, we offer Learning Support sessions to individuals or groups. In our Senior School, many of these will take place outside timetabled lessons, for example during the lunch period or before or after school. It may be suitable for a student to be withdrawn from a curriculum subject and have learning support during the released time. This support is targeted to the individual's or group's needs. In our Junior School, a small learning support group may concentrate on developing skills such as phonics, spelling, maths and handwriting for a short, fixed period of time, though our first intervention tends to be within the classroom.
- 4.6 **Code of Practice:** Our approach to the detection and management of learning difficulties will be guided by the *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years* (DFE - 0000205-2013), Department for Education (DfE), January 2015 (**Code**), or any substituting or amending code of practice issued from time to time by the Department for Education (**DfE**). In general, our approach will be cautious so as not unnecessarily to run the risk of a child being labelled "dyslexic" when a later assessment might result in a different explanation for the difficulty.
- 4.7 **Education Health and Care plans (EHC plan):** Parents and the School have the right under section 36(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ask the local authority to make an assessment with a view to drawing up an EHC plan. The School will always consult with parents before exercising this right. If the local authority refuses to make an assessment, the parents (but not the School) have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).
- 4.8 Where a prospective pupil has an EHC plan, we will consult with the parents and, where appropriate, the local authority to ensure that the provision specified in the EHC plan can be delivered by the School. We will co-operate with the local authority to ensure that relevant reviews of EHC plans are carried out as required.
- 4.9 Any additional services that are needed to meet the requirements of the EHC plan will need to be charged to the local authority if the authority is responsible for the fees and our school is named in Section I of the EHC plan. In all other circumstances charges will be made directly to parents unless the additional services can be considered to be a "reasonable adjustment" where no charge will be made, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.10 **Welfare needs:** The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties may be at risk of being bullied. The School has an anti-bullying policy which makes it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously. If parents are concerned about their child's welfare they can approach the pupil's form teacher or any senior member of staff to discuss their concerns in private at any time.
- 4.11 Additional barriers can exist when detecting the abuse or neglect of pupils with a special educational need or disability creating additional safeguarding challenges for those involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of this group of children. The School is mindful in particular that:

- 4.11.1 assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the pupil's special educational need or disability without further exploration;
  - 4.11.2 pupils with a special education need or disability can be disproportionately impacted by bullying without outwardly showing any signs; and
  - 4.11.3 there may be communication barriers which are difficult to overcome to identify whether action under this policy is required.
  - 4.12.4 any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- 4.12 **Disability:** The School recognises that some pupils with special education needs or learning difficulties may also have a disability. Pupils and parents are referred to the School's Disability policy. The School will make all reasonable adjustments in order to afford opportunity to disabled pupils. However if, despite such adjustments, the School is unable to provide adequately for the pupil's needs, the School may decline to offer a place to a pupil or request you withdraw your child from the School (see 5.1 below).
- 4.13 **Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO):** The Junior School and Senior School SENCOs have responsibility for:
- 4.13.1 ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of a child's special educational needs;
  - 4.13.2 advising and supporting other staff in the School;
  - 4.13.3 ensuring that appropriate Individual Education Plans are in place;
  - 4.13.4 ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special education needs is collected, recorded and updated;
  - 4.13.5 undertaking any other appropriate duties in accordance with the Code of Practice on special educational needs.
- 4.14 **Responsibility:** Parents bear the overall responsibility for taking decisions about the management of their child's learning difficulties. A parent who chooses to have a formal assessment should make arrangements accordingly with the School or outside but must ensure that we are given copies of all advice and reports received.
- 4.15 **External teaching:** Parents may opt for additional specialist teaching outside the School, provided that the Head is satisfied with your child's safety and travel arrangements and also that the additional specialist teaching is at times which fit in with the remainder of the curriculum, timetable and community life of the School.
- 4.16 **Information:** Because dyslexia and some other learning difficulties are often inherited, we need to know at the outset if you (either parent) or your children or close relations have been affected by a learning difficulty at any time. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. You must also provide us with a copy of any report or recommendations which have been made in relation to special educational needs at your child's previous school or elsewhere within the last 12 months.
- 4.17 **Concerns:** We need to know immediately if your child's progress or behaviour causes you concern so that we can devise and agree a strategy with you and carry it out.

- 4.18 **Examinations:** Children who have been diagnosed as having a learning difficulty may be eligible to apply for Access Arrangements in our Senior School including extra time. The School offers an assessment service and we ask parents to liaise with the Senior School SENCO about arrangements. No such extra time is offered in our Junior School, although recommended strategies may well be adopted during summative assessments (e.g. using a different font to help visual impairment).

## 5 **Alternative arrangements**

- 5.1 **Withdrawal:** We reserve the right, following consultation with you, to ask or require you to withdraw your child from the School if, in our opinion after **making all reasonable adjustments and exhausting appropriate strategies:**
- 5.1.1 your child is in need of a formal assessment, additional specialist teaching, learning support or medication to which you do not consent; and / or
  - 5.1.2 you have withheld information from the School which, had the information been provided, would have made a significant difference to the School's management of your child's learning difficulties; and / or
  - 5.1.3 your child's learning difficulties require a level of support or medication which, in the professional judgment of the Head, the School is unable to provide, manage or arrange;
  - 5.1.4 your child has special educational needs that make it unlikely she will be able to benefit sufficiently from the mainstream education and facilities which we provide.
- 5.2 **Alternative placement:** In any of these circumstances we will do what is reasonable to help you to find an alternative placement which will provide your child with the necessary level of teaching and support.
- 5.3 **Financial:** Withdrawal of a pupil in these circumstances will not incur a charge to fees in lieu of notice. The deposit paid in respect of your child will be credited to your account.

<b>Authorised by</b>	Resolution of the LGE Committee
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<b>Date</b>	September 2018
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<b>Effective date of the policy</b>	September 2018
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