



Solihull School

Learning Support Policy

1. Aims of the Learning Support Department

The Learning Support Department aims to enable all pupils to achieve their full academic potential and to ensure that no pupil's progress is held back by any kind of learning difficulty. We aim to create an environment for learning where each and every pupil is seen as an individual with individual needs.

Central to the policy is the recognition that very able and highly intelligent individuals may suffer from weaknesses or difficulties in particular areas; we aim to help such pupils realise their true potential. We believe it is crucial that all pupils at Solihull School have full access to the curriculum.

The service provided is an integral part of the curriculum: it supports learning and the acquisition of skills in all subject areas. We aim to encourage all teaching staff to develop an awareness of individual and sometimes alternative learning styles.

2. Objectives of the Learning Support Department

- To ensure all pupils who have any kind of learning difficulty, or who need revision of particular skills, are identified at the earliest possible stage. (See screening and identification, section 8).
- To provide additional tuition and support, wherever reasonably practicable, for pupils who have been identified as having a learning difficulty. Pupils who are exceptionally gifted in a specific subject area are also identified and provided for within their subject specialism where staffing allows.
- To provide short courses/workshops to assist pupils who have difficulty with study skills such as: revision and examination techniques, organisation, note-taking, essay-writing, and handwriting.
- To provide a service which enables all staff to be made aware of and have an understanding of, existing educational/medical conditions such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, NVLD, and Asperger's Syndrome.
- To monitor the progress of all pupils receiving additional tuition and support.
- To ensure that tutors, form tutors, Heads of Year and parents are aware of the pupil's progress.
- To maintain a special educational needs register, and ensure that all members of staff are fully aware of the learning difficulties of the pupils they teach. To provide regular in-service training to this end.
- To provide advice to staff about appropriate teaching strategies across the curriculum in respect of pupils with difficulties (SpLD Facts and Teaching Strategies – Staff Only on Barney)).
- To encourage staff to participate in the monitoring of individual pupils' progress.
- To communicate with outside agencies, such as Educational Psychologists, and to provide information for such agencies to assess pupils as appropriate.
- To monitor and arrange requests to Examination Boards for special consideration or extra time to be made available.
- The Learning Support Department addresses each individual's requirements and offers a comprehensive programme designed to assess, support, and monitor pupils with any additional educational needs.

3. Current Framework of Support

- **Junior School Years 3, 4, 5 & 6** Small group weekly support withdrawn from lessons by prior arrangement with Junior School
 - **Lower School Years 7 & 8** Small group weekly support withdrawn on a rota basis from a variety of rotating lessons.
 - **Middle School Years 9, 10 & 11** Individual and small group support in lunchtimes, after school and occasionally during lesson times. Short courses are also available including study skills and literacy workshops.
 - **Upper School Sixth Form** 1:1 support by invitation & referral. Support in essay writing, speed-reading, reading for meaning, revision techniques, examination techniques, note-taking and organisational skills.
 - **In-lesson Support and Observation** Throughout the year groups.
- The paired reading initiative scheme, overseen by the Learning Support department and run by a member of the English/library staff, is also offered to students in year 7 who are seen to be struggling with higher reading skills. Pupils in the LVI and UV act as mentors to such pupils.
 - Learning Support Clinic is a new initiative which takes place on a weekly basis during the lunch hour. This enables students on the SEN register who would like additional help, to attend a staffed drop-in session for individual support.

4. New Staff Information and Training

A Learning Support training session is given to all new staff in the week prior to their commencement of duties at the school. During this session the Director of Learning Support outlines the structure of the support system and details the various procedures for referring pupils. Information packs regarding all the different disorders are handed out, which give relevant information on symptoms and teaching strategies.

5. Staff Training / INSET

Learning Support is an integral part of the INSET programme with opportunities to deliver training to staff in both school procedures and current thinking in the field of Learning Support. Past INSET courses have covered topics such as Autism, Dyslexia, and current departmental initiatives.

In addition to structured INSET training sessions, all staff are constantly updated with regard to pupils with difficulties. Pupil information, Individual Education Plans (Pupil Profile Sheets), and teaching strategies are constantly disseminated and are readily available where appropriate on the school's admin database. Many staff will approach the Director of Learning Support directly to access further training, particularly when they are interested in the nature of a particular pupil.

In addition, through attending Academic Board meetings and Heads of Department meetings, the Director of Learning Support can ensure that current initiatives are passed down to all teaching staff via their Heads of Department.

6. The Special Educational Needs Register

A register of Special Educational Needs is kept each year and updated at least fortnightly, sometimes weekly. Copies are forwarded to every member of teaching staff who is expected to copy across relevant details of the register into their mark books. In addition teaching staff can access Individual Education Plans (Pupil Profile Sheets) where they are appropriate and strategies

for teaching certain pupils on the register. The SEN register gives name, form, date and type of diagnosis. Approximately 10% of pupils are on the register.

7. Pupils Statemented by the Local Education Authority

At present there are no pupils who have been Statemented by the Local Education Authority. In recent years however, the School has had pupils with a Statement and subsequently appointed a Learning Support Assistant funded by the LEA. The LSA was responsible for providing support for these pupils on a daily basis and reported to the Director of Learning Support regarding their progress on a regular basis. The LSA also produced an information and advice sheet for teaching staff which was given to all of the pupils' teachers at the start of the academic year and updated accordingly. Formal annual reviews together with informal twice-yearly reviews were held in strict accordance with LEA guidelines. If and when the situation presents itself in the future the School will adopt the same procedures as previous.

8. Screening and Identification

Central to the School's policy on Learning Support is the principle that all pupils in the school will be screened for the possible identification of learning difficulties. Screening and identification takes place at two levels. In the first instance all pupils are screened upon entry to the school. This differs slightly depending on the age of the pupil. As we believe that early identification of difficulties is essential, the Junior School in particular takes an active part in initial screening. This takes the form of both reading age and spelling age tests, which are given to all pupils in the Junior school within the first three weeks of the new academic year. Pupils who give cause for concern in these tests are referred immediately to the Junior school LS co-ordinator, who then liaises with the Director of Learning support to plan a programme of intervention, or further testing, should this be required. Parents are kept informed of the whole process. Upon entry to the senior school, all pupils in Year 7, and all new pupils in Years 8, 9 & 10, are given a range of computer based diagnostic tests, LASS, including tests in spelling, reading, visual and auditory memory, spatial awareness, and reasoning. Once again, pupils whose results give cause for concern would be flagged up and subsequently discussed with form tutors, Heads of Year, and parents. Further testing is then given where appropriate.

On another level, the School has a procedure for referring pupils who despite not showing difficulties earlier on, may have weaknesses which appear as they settle into the school.

Pupils can be referred to the Director of Learning Support for an initial chat, or assessment where appropriate. A pupil may be referred by:

- Parents. Parents are invited to inform the school if they know their child has a Specific Learning Difficulty and they would be interested in extra support for him/her. Parents may also be alerted to a problem in discussions of their child's progress at parents' evenings or as a result of term or exam grades, and they may subsequently contact the form tutor to register a concern.
- A pupil's subject teachers. Any subject teacher may be concerned about a pupil's progress and suspect a Specific Learning Difficulty. Teachers either fill in a referral form, or more usually contact the Director of Learning Support directly by Email, or initial chat.
- The form tutor / Head of Year. There may be concerns about a pupil's progress or behaviour, and he/she may be referred for assessment to see whether there is an underlying Specific Learning Difficulty.

9. Initial Assessment

If the pupils' parents are in agreement, the Director of Learning Support will carry out a number of assessments, using standardised tests to ascertain whether the pupil has a Specific Learning Difficulty. (S)he will then write up the findings in a report. A copy is then forwarded to the pupil's parents, form tutor, and to the relevant teacher if the assessment was initiated by a subject teacher.

The initial assessment will contain recommendations, which may include a programme of individual/small group support. If this is the case, the pupil's parents are notified of when and where such support might take place. In addition, a further assessment by an Educational Psychologist may be recommended, in which case a referral will be made to external agencies. If no underlying difficulties are found, the pupil's notes will be kept on record and a close eye kept on the progress of the pupil by all those concerned.

10. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) / Pupil Profile Sheets (PPSs)

In some cases where there is thought to be a need, the Director of Learning Support, in conjunction with relevant staff, draws up an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) designed to meet the needs which have been identified. IEPs are designed to produce a working document which will help the pupil to focus his or her efforts on the targets set out within the IEP. Each IEP sets out three or four targets and offers suggestions and strategies for teachers and parents as to how these targets might be achieved. The targets and IEPs will be reviewed regularly, and adjusted accordingly. If it is felt that a target has been fully met it will be removed from the IEP, or in some instances a new target set. A sample IEP is given in the appendix.

At present the department is updating the system of IEPs and replacing IEPs with Pupil Profile Sheets (PPSs). In essence these are the same type of document as IEPs in that they will set out targets for the pupil to work towards, however they will give more information about a pupil's individual difficulties, and they will also include teaching strategies which aim to minimise the difficulties caused by the pupil's disability.

11. Very Able Pupils (Gifted and Talented)

At Solihull School we consider all our pupils to be more able, given the selective nature of the school. We also acknowledge however that some pupils may have a special talent or ability that will need to be nurtured during their time at the school, whether that be a musical, mathematical, linguistic, artistic, sporting, dramatic, or scientific talent. It is the responsibility of the school and subject departments within the school to ensure that these needs are being met. These talents might be nurtured through enrichment programmes, cultural visits, special courses, visiting speakers, or through clubs and societies. In some cases departments might arrange special programmes of study, or themed topics. The key to addressing the issues of gifted, talented, or very able pupils lies in the effective differentiation of lessons. Each department must be responsible for ensuring that they are not only identifying such pupils with talents but also differentiating their schemes of work to such an extent that all pupils are catered for.

Update: The School's development plan includes a section on 'Gifted and Talented' and it is thought that the school is considering appointing a G & T co-ordinator to oversee this area of specialised learning.

12. Access Arrangements and Special Considerations for Examinations

The Examinations Officer and Director of Learning Support work together throughout the year, and in particular in September, to compile an up to date list of pupils who have been granted extra time or special examination arrangements in forthcoming public examinations. The amount of extra time

granted, (up to a maximum of 25%), will also be dependent on the severity of the difficulty. The examinations officer will then submit the requests online to the appropriate exam board. This is usually in the October prior to the forthcoming January or June examinations.

Some pupils who have particular and severe difficulties with handwriting, may have a recommendation to use a laptop computer in the latter half of their school career. Where these arrangements are considered necessary for public examinations, the Examinations Officer will apply for this, again online. All relevant documentation is held in accordance with strict confidentiality guidelines, by both the Director of Learning Support, and the Examinations Officer. The School has a separate Policy pertaining to the use of laptops.

A list of those who are eligible for extra time is available at appropriate times throughout the year on the school's network system. The list is also emailed directly to Heads of Department who notify their staff accordingly.

13. Monitoring Progress and Record Keeping

Records of pupils' progress are kept and a programme of formal and informal assessment is carried out.

Pupils in the Junior School are tested twice yearly in both reading and spelling. Pupils further up the school are tested on a regular basis usually within their Learning Support lessons. Reviews of targets within IEPs/PPSs are also used as a way of monitoring progress in conjunction with relevant teaching staff.

Detailed records of all support sessions and attendance at study skills workshops, are kept by the Director of Learning Support, and are held in a way which observes strict confidentiality issues. Each pupil on the SEN register has a detailed file which includes some, if not all of the following:

- An internal or external diagnostic report
- Assessment results
- Original referral details
- A self appraisal / assessment by the pupil concerned
- An IEP/PPS
- A log of support offered / taken (copy in appendix)
- Progress reports
- Parental contact