

Using the Graduated Approach

By Kelly Challis

Difficulties with reading and spelling not only create many challenges for those who have dyslexia, but also for those other young people who are quietly struggling with literacy difficulties in our education system without a diagnosis.

When using the graduated approach, I need to make sure there is movement around the four stages of action; these stages being assess, plan, do, and review. The information I collect helps me to understand the needs of pupils with literacy difficulties and dyslexia, and as a result I can put into place strategies to support these learners, working with them to make good progress and ultimately to secure good outcomes in their education.

In the **'assess'** stage, I not only use summative and formative assessments, but I also take into consideration the views and experiences of the learner's parents/carers, as well as the learner's own view: **what** are they finding difficult, and **why**? It is important at this stage to discuss with the SENCO any standardised scores from educational psychology assessments to make sure I understand their meaning and application to my planning.

In order to teach according to each child's educational needs as far as possible, it is essential to see them as a *whole* person, complete with individual strengths and weaknesses. The information I gather helps me personalise my teaching and address their specific needs.

In the **'plan'** stage of the graduated approach there are 2 areas which need to be considered. First of all, what can I include in my teaching to respond to my pupil with dyslexia's identified needs? If they have a poor working memory, I must ensure I do not overload this, taking care not to give several instructions at a time. In addition, I need to plan mini-plenaries or Q&As to refresh their memories and gauge their understanding. The SEND Code of Practice is clear that research informs us that the most impact on learner progress comes from the quality of teaching in the classroom (Education Endowment Fund).

The other area to plan for is targeted provision. Intervention forms an important part of assessment. For example, a learner with dyslexia may need a phonics intervention, an input of vocabulary, both every day and subject specific, or extra reading practice to develop fluency and comprehension. It is important that teachers work closely with teaching assistants or other staff to assess the impact of such targeted interventions and have clear entry and exit criteria.

The **'do'** stage of the graduated approach puts my plans into action. The minor adaptations I can make to day-to-day practice and to the learning environment can, in turn, make a huge difference to those learners with literacy difficulties or dyslexia. An added bonus is that all learners will benefit from these changes.

So, what do these changes mean for my learners? It means they can navigate texts with more ease and I can signpost without telling them the answers, it allows the learners to problem solve using my displays rather than raising their hand for me to help them. It means I am confident that the teaching I am delivering is pitched at a level that all learners can engage with.

Some of the adaptations and considerations I have made in my teaching to support my learners with literacy difficulties and dyslexia are:

- I make information on the white board is clear and uncluttered. I also number the start of each line or topic clearly.
- My displays around the classroom are informative and updated regularly. I explain and talk about what is in the displays, illustrating how they can be helpful and supportive.

- I consider the readability of worksheets, for example the layout, size and type of font. I tend to use Arial, 12 point, and avoid underlining by using boxes or bold. If learners are to write on the worksheet then I make sure they have enough space to write legibly.

These adaptations help learners to navigate texts with more ease and allows them to problem solve using resources such as displays independently, rather than raising their hand for me to help them.

At the **'review'** stage, when looking at the impact of teaching a dyslexic learner, I cannot overstate the importance of listening to the views both of my learners and their parents or carers. Their input provides me with valuable insights and informs my subsequent planning.

The majority of my pupils with dyslexia will have their needs met through high quality teaching and, if necessary, targeted intervention. The responsibility of their progress lies with us, the class or subject teacher, and not with the SENCO or learning support department. As teachers, it is absolutely essential that we remain flexible and sensitive in all our teaching when working pupils with SEN.