



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Difficulties

Tuesday 20th March 2018

Committee Room 3 – House of Lords

2pm – 4pm

Where are we on the journey towards comprehensive teacher awareness of their obligations to meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice?

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions, Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair of APPG on Dyslexia and Other Specific Learning Difficulties.

2. Liz Horobin, BDA Project Director, Achievements from a two-year project

Liz gave feedback on the project activities during the past two years to raise teacher awareness. This included free neurodiversity training and resources; the development of the Dyslex.io website and assets such as the See Dyslexia Differently animation. See presentation for full details.

Question from Judith Sanson, Dyslexia International about working with trade unions. Liz explained that the BDA continues to try and reach out to trade unions.

Question from Paul Milton, Independent Ambassador for Arts, Dyslexia and Disabilities around teacher retention.

Liz explained that there is evidence that schools who invest in teacher training have much better teacher retention.

3. Dr Yota Dimitriadi, Course Leader for Secondary Computer Science, Snr Fellow of the HEA, Academic Adviser to the Disability Officer, TEL Coordinator, Executive Coach, University of Reading, Institute of Education

Dr. Yota gave an overview from experience of how in reality NQTs are best prepared for the classroom and encountering SEND pupils - with an example of good practice in Teacher Training.

See presentation for full details.

Question from Lord Addington around whether teachers in mainstream schools are given enough flexibility in the classroom to adapt to different learning styles.

Dr Yota Dimitriadi explained that she felt there is a lot of good will, however, teachers are encouraged to be results focussed so there's limited flexibility in certain years such as Year 6 where SATs are a big influencer.

Question from Professor Angela Fawcett around the evidence for a dip in teachers' confidence in 2016 and comment from Andy Cook, Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre, around the importance of NQTs having confidence with SEND.

Dr Yota Dimitriadi explained that data can fluctuate because of numbers but will be followed up and explores more with future surveys.

Question from Dan Baynes, Driver Youth Trust, asking if there are any areas we should particularly focus on from the recent NQT consultation.

Dr Yota Dimitriadi shared her concerns for new changes and the impact on teacher recruitment and retention.

4. Mike Johnson, Executive Vice-chair, BDA Accreditation Board

Mike shared evidence and examples of specialist teacher training and the benefit to mainstream schools. Schools who employ AMBDA teachers have a cost-effective way to carry out assessments, enabling children to receive appropriate support and secure exam access arrangements.

See presentation for full details.

Jacqueline Murray, Principal Educational Psychologist, Fairley House School shared her concern that most access arrangements are being made for private school pupils and that requiring a level 7 qualification to sign off reports for access arrangements may be causing a barrier in state schools.

Mike Johnson explained that by having an internal specialist there are greater opportunities for communication between the assessor and teachers/ support staff who work with pupils with dyslexia and other SpLDs. This will then encourage more appropriate support and arrangements for pupils in the classroom as well as allowing for access arrangements for exams.

Margaret Malpas added that there is evidence to show that private schools are not overly assessing and applying for access arrangements, but that they generally have more affluent parents who are able to afford a private dyslexia assessment. Whereas, in state schools very few pupils are being assessed and therefore not receiving appropriate support or access arrangements.

Brendan Wignall, CReSTeD gave his support of Mike's presentation and the points raised around the need for specialist teachers.

Gillian Audley, BDA Trustee, re-iterated that Ofsted must be on board and looking to track dyslexic learners in school to ensure dyslexia-friendly teaching is seen as essential by schools. Sharon Hodgson MP, commented that 'What gets measured, gets done!' and agreed to write to Ofsted on behalf of the group.

5. Joanna Israel, Department for Education, Assistant Director, English, Curriculum Policy Division, The Government's proposal to introduce English Hubs

Joanna explained about the proposal to introduce 35 English Hubs throughout the country, in a project which will initially be funded for 2 years and aimed at early intervention to help children with literacy difficulties during Reception and Year 1.

See presentation for full details.

Lord Addington asked what is being done to reach children with different learning styles and those who aren't able to access phonics in the same way as pupils without dyslexia and other SpLDs.

Joanna explained that phonics will be one part of English Hubs, but there will be other parts too, such as looking at strategies like reading to children daily.

Becky Benwell, DfE (SEND), explained that the DfE are working on other projects, such as the BDA neurodiversity project mentioned by Liz Horobin, as well as the introduction of English Hubs.

Margaret Malpas asked how we can communicate with the DfE about dyslexia provision in these hubs.

Joanna explained that it why they are attending events such as this APPG meeting as well as other consultation to help build the picture and develop plans.

Paul Milton asked why libraries are being closed, but money being put into new English hubs.

Becky explained that those decisions are above their level, but reassured Paul that they are trying to do everything they can to support literacy development.

Questions:

Gillian Audley and Mike Johnson expressed the need for specialist teachers to be employed in these hubs and Mike suggested English hubs could be an ideal place to offer ATS courses to teachers.

Fay Dutton explained the importance of English hubs not being so focussed that they miss dyslexic children.

Dan Baynes asked if there will be built in SEN provision in the English hubs.

Helen Milton suggested information about dyslexia should be given to parents when their children start school to help identify dyslexia.

Response:

Becky explained that the SEN local offer attempts to address readily available information for parents but acknowledged it's a work in progress and currently patchy. They are looking at gaps and bringing together resources that are already in existence to fill these gaps with a holistic approach.

Joanna shared that this meeting has been useful to gain more considerations and help with evolving plans for English hubs.

Questions:

Kevin Smith, PATOSS, shared his experiences of young children having very mixed phonics abilities. He shared a request for the need to have a simple method to record issues around literacy such as strategies that work with individual children and individual difficulties, that can be passed from one teacher to the next.

Liz Horobin shared concerns over too much focus on phonics rather than reading comprehension.

Professor Angela Fawcett stressed the need for fluency and recognition of sounds to develop comprehension rather than just focussing on phonics.

Response:

Joanna said they would take away the fact that there is a need to simply record literacy difficulties to aid sharing of information about individual children between teachers.

She also re-iterated that they agree phonics is a part of the package, but there is more.

Judith Sanson shared information about Dyslexia International.

6. AOB

None raised

7. Date of next meeting, 13th June 2018, 2pm – 4pm.

4 pm – Sharon Hodgson MP closed the meeting

Attendees: Sharon Hodgson MP; Lord Addington BDA President; Dr Yota Dimitriadi University of Reading; Liz Horobin BDA Project Director; Mike Johnson Executive Vice Chair of BDA Accreditation Board; Joanna Israel Department for Education; Becky Benwell Department for Education; Margaret Malpas BDA Vice President; Judith Sanson Dyslexia International; Dan Baynes Driver Youth Trust; Brendan Wignall CReSTeD; Kathryn Benzine Dyslexia Action; Andy Cook Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre; Paul Milton; Helen Milton; Ian Milton; Matt Davis Transport for London; Richard White Michael Sieff Foundation; Maria Kyriacou Ascentis; Fay Dutton BDA; Pete Phillips Hampshire Police; Gillian Audley BDA; Margaret Heath Waltham Forest Dyslexia Association; Charlie Heath Parkview School; Jacqueline Murray Fairley House; Belinda Seeff-Gabriel; Patricia Snowdon Fairley House School; Richard Macer Platform Productions; Angela Fawcett BDA Vice President; David Fawcett; Kevin Smith PATOSS; Helen Boden BDA Chief Executive; Liz Loly BDA Communications; Jack Mayorcas and Sabrina Churchley, Sharon Hodgson's office.