

Assessing Specific Learning Difficulties

Contextualised assessments

Information for parents and carers



We want all children to have really good opportunities to play and learn in their local nursery or school.

There are many reasons why children may need support to help them learn.

They may have difficulties with reading and understanding written language:

- Reading quickly and accurately
- Spelling words correctly
- Understanding what they read

They could have difficulty writing:

- Forming letters and words neatly
- Organising their thoughts on paper

They might also have difficulty understanding and working with numbers:

- Doing basic maths calculations
- Understanding number concepts
- Remembering maths facts

If you have any concerns about how your child is getting on at school or you feel that they need extra help with their learning, the best thing to do is to speak with your child's teacher.

Supporting learners

Some children need more support in school to help them learn. Additional support may be needed for a short time or a longer period; a smaller number of pupils need additional support throughout their time at school. Additional Support Needs (ASN) can be present from birth or at any point in a young person's life and may arise for a number of reasons:

- The learning environment
- Family circumstances
- Health and care needs
- Social and emotional factors

The kind of additional support we give is wide and varied and depends on the individual child.

For more information speak to your school or visit

www.fife.gov.uk/pupilsupport

How we identify specific learning difficulties

We use a contextualised assessment to understand how a child learns in different situations (e.g. physical environment, social environment) to find the best ways to support them.

The assessment focusses on the child's learning and can help identify:

- Areas of strength and development needs
- How they learn in relation to the kind of task or activity they are doing
- How they respond to support
- Next steps in learning and types of support needed

A contextualised assessment is often used to establish specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia.

What it involves

The assessment involves:

- Talking and listening to the child, family, and professionals
- Observing them in different school settings
- Analysing their schoolwork
- Working with them on tasks to better understand how they learn

How long it takes

The assessment is an ongoing cycle of assessing, planning, doing and reviewing. Over time, it provides a clear picture of how a child learns, highlighting strengths, areas for development, and the teaching approaches best suited to their learning style.

A staff member, usually the Learning Support Teacher, will gather this information and contact parents/carers within eight weeks to share findings or provide updates.

Starting the assessment

School staff might think about an assessment if they notice something about a child's learning.

They'll speak to the appropriate staff member, for example the Learning Support Teacher, and will always talk to the child's parents/ carers before starting an assessment.

Parents/carers and young people aged 12 and older can ask the school for an assessment to check for things like dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia. It's best if parents/carers write to the school so they can keep proper records.

It helps to have some support already in place and evidence gathered before the assessment process begins. This can help decide if an assessment is needed. Gathering evidence may involve trying different strategies or resources with your child and seeing how effective they are.

Who to talk to if you think your child needs an assessment

You can speak to your child's teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, or a member of the school's Leadership team.

Everyone works together to support your child, so don't hesitate to reach out.