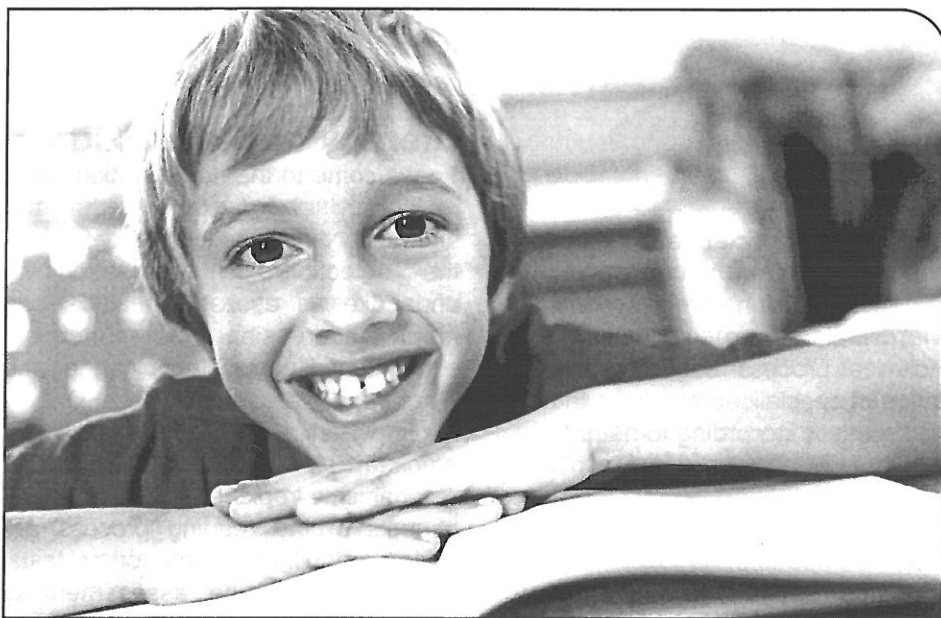


Dyslexia and the inclusive classroom

Gavin Reid ponders the way in which dyslexia fits into the inclusive school model and offers some pointers for good classroom practice



The inclusive school is now a reality – for many a successful one – but the growing pains that have accompanied its evolution have resulted in casualties along the way. Teachers have been swamped with demands that have not been accompanied by adequate training or support, some students

Much of the success of inclusion depends on the extent and the level of training

have been overwhelmed by the pace of learning, and the potentially enriched experience of a broad and diverse curriculum for many has been lost through lack of access and support. Parents have been confused, anxious and in some cases sidelined!

But logically, and eventually, it is fairly certain that 'inclusion' will work. It is the right and proper way to run an educational provision and it should also be appropriate for children

with dyslexia (and other specific difficulties). It acknowledges the need for normalisation and the desire to develop learners' strengths through curriculum choice and varied learning opportunities.

Issues to consider

Much of the success of inclusion depends on the extent and the level of training. The Rose Report on Dyslexia in 2009 pointed out that 'classroom teachers should develop core skills for recognising children with risk factors of dyslexia and put in appropriate interventions immediately'. This kind of statement has serious implications for training and this was further emphasised by Sheena Bell and Bernadette McLean in 2011 in response to the above quotation: 'Dyslexia diagnosis remains an art, not a science, and the diagnosis is made by the tester and not by the tests.' Training, therefore, is the principal solution, and the concept of 'noticing and adjusting' teaching to match

students' learning needs is crucial for effective practice in an inclusive school. But this takes management support, comprehensive training and specific and committed policies for practice.

Professor Brahm Norwich, in his writings, ponders whether the term 'inclusion' has become too broad and 'all encompassing' to be really useful or meaningful. He argues that inclusive educational provision may be better framed within a set of 'flexible and interacting continua'. The continuum concept he suggests arises from the idea that there is a range of options along each dimension, which represent various balances between common aspects (that meet inclusive values) and differentiated aspects (that meet individual needs and requirements).

It is this premise that motivated me to write a second edition of my book *Dyslexia and Inclusion* – ie that inclusion can be successful, but appropriate training and support from management must accompany it and a range of options must be available to meet the social, emotional and learning needs of children with dyslexia.

It has been suggested that there is a dilemma between universalism (treating all the same) and the concept of 'difference' and that there are moves towards the use of fine-grained categories, suggesting a focus on pupil differences. It's also suggested that some of these categories (for example, autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia) have gained currency as a result of pressure from parents and voluntary organisations or as a result of professional pressures. This idea provides a backdrop for the conflicts inherent in an inclusive system.



> This dilemma was also suggested by Brahm Norwich in 2009 when he asked how compatible the recognition of dyslexia was with inclusive education. He argued that there was a tension between an 'all-encompassing' and a 'specific' kind of inclusiveness. This tension, he argued, represented different movements, one that focused on a broad group (the 'socially excluded', 'vulnerable' or those with 'additional needs'), the other associated with specific interest groups that focused on medically defined areas of difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism. This balance between common and specific SEN and disability aspects of inclusiveness, according to Norwich, had clear implications for the direction of policy and practice for schools, local authorities and voluntary organisations.

Defining inclusion

Artemi Sakellariadis, Director of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education in the UK, suggests that developing inclusive provision is not so much about what you do, as about how you do it. She asserts that 'we are talking about a process, not a method'. This means that developing an inclusive system of provision will take place over time and cannot happen overnight. The key point here is that inclusion needs to be seen as a process – not a product. This process takes time and evolves. This is indicated in my definition: 'Inclusion is a process that accommodates to the

educational, social and emotional needs of children, young people and families. Inclusion is *not* synonymous with mainstream schooling. The inclusive process can incorporate a range of specialised provision that can be accessed according to need.'

The needs of learners with dyslexia

How compatible is dyslexia with inclusive education? Much of the success of inclusive provision rests on the 'readiness to include' and this depends on the level of training and how prepared teachers and schools

The teacher needs to be empowered to take some responsibility for the assessment process

are for these challenges. It is essential to establish communication with everyone working with the student, as well as with the parents or guardians.

Assessment therefore is the necessary starting point, but it is important that the time allocated for assessment is used appropriately and productively. That is why a range of materials should be used and the teacher needs to be empowered to take some responsibility for the assessment process – to observe, to identify, to monitor and to plan appropriate intervention based on a solid and sound framework. A good example of this is the innovative

assessment framework developed through Dyslexia Scotland and the Scottish Government – www.frameworkforinclusion.org/AssessingDyslexia/

Addressing difficulties is a question of problem solving. It is important to:

- > identify the specific barriers to the student's learning in the classroom environment and in different areas of the curriculum
- > reflect on the requirements of different areas of the curriculum
- > reflect on what will best address those barriers to help the learner achieve in the classroom.

Literacy and dyslexia

So we come to the key question 'what is literacy' and I suggest that the answer to that question will determine the selection of information to undertake an assessment. This can mean addressing the functional aspects of literacy (technical) or the purpose of literacy (meaning). One of the important aspects of this is to have efficient and effective monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that all aspects of the reading process are addressed. Unlike some other tests, this should include assessment of children's inferential understanding of text as well as the literal meaning of the passage. Identifying the inferences in texts is an important element for developing higher order thinking and processing skills and is particularly important for children with dyslexia, as often their main focus tends to be on mastering the bottom-up sub-skills of reading and the inferential meanings of the text are sometimes lost. This can also lead to developing self-assessment and metacognitive skills and these are essential for independent learning.

The specialist position

The specialist position is strongly advocated by organisations such as the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre and Dyslexia Action Training and Professional Development (<http://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk>), which are both leading providers of specialist and short courses in the field of dyslexia and specific learning difficulties for teachers, teaching assistants and other professionals in

the UK. In Scotland some universities and independent organisations, such as Dysguise (www.dysguise.com), also offer quality courses incorporating specialist and curriculum approaches.

There is still, however, a dilemma between specialism and inclusion. Ideally all intervention should be integrated in some way into the curriculum. This transfer from specialised input to the main body of the curriculum is crucial. Curriculum-based intervention can present two challenges:

- > the need to develop learner strategies to help the student cope with his/her dyslexic difficulties
- > the recognition that difficulties in accessing the curriculum can place the student with dyslexia at a disadvantage. This can be minimised through the use of accommodations.

There is no 'off-the-shelf' answer to dyslexia

It may only take some minor adjustments in planning and teaching to make a difference. Some accommodations can include:

- > additional time to complete a task
- > printed handouts
- > summaries of the work
- > students working together in small groups
- > grades and marking that show individual improvement so that it is meaningful for that individual student
- > a marking and grading system that is constructive.

Planning for learning in the secondary school

One of the key issues in relation to successful outcomes in secondary school concerns the notion of responsibility. It is important to ensure that the needs of dyslexic children are met and that all members of staff become fully involved. School management need to ensure that:

- > the ethos of the school is supportive.

The philosophy of the school together with attitudes and actions must be known to all staff

- > staff should be encouraged

to acknowledge that effective differentiation is the means to support students with dyslexia in accessing the curriculum and this support needs to be put in place to help with planning, presentation and the development of materials.

- > parents need to be considered. Parents are a very rich source of information and it is important that collaboration between home and school is formalised and monitored. It is essential that these issues are fully addressed in order that the student with dyslexia can achieve some success in different subject areas. Teaching and learning should be planned together. This implies that knowledge of teaching strategies and the learner's individual strengths and difficulties and learning style are necessary in order for planning and presentation of learning to be effective.

There is no 'off-the-shelf' answer to dyslexia. There are many key factors that play a role in supporting students with dyslexia. These include:

- > curriculum development
 - > task differentiation and presentation
 - > knowledge of the student's individual learning style
 - > the availability of a comprehensive and contextualised assessment to support planning intervention
 - > opportunities for appropriate and practical training for all school staff.
- If these factors are acknowledged then all students with dyslexia can have full access to the mainstream curriculum.

It is suggested here that the responsibility for meeting the needs of children with dyslexia should not necessarily rest in the hands of specialists. Certainly those teachers who have specialist training and experience play a vitally important role. They can pass on their skills to class teachers and help to ensure that all staff have an awareness and some training in the different aspects of dyslexia. Additionally, however, some children with dyslexia will need specialist 'bottom-up' intervention such as those approaches developed by Dyslexia Action and the Helen Arkell Centre in the UK and the Orton-Gillingham Approach in the USA and Canada.

For inclusion to be successful at the

school level, co-ordinated curriculum planning and shared objectives between home and school are required and the development of

If it is not working then there need to be mechanisms for change

individual programmes of work can help to achieve this. Consultation and planning are two of the key factors that can bring about inclusion and full access to the curriculum.

Conclusion

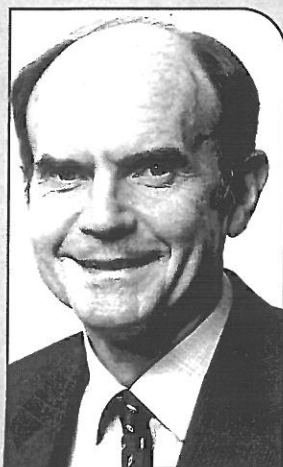
Baroness Warnock now suggests that we should be striving to 'include all children in the common educational enterprise of learning, wherever they learn best'. The key is not where or how, it is not an equality issue – it is a learning issue. The key is the impact the learning has on the student. If it is not working then there need to be mechanisms for change.

Dyslexia should not be seen as a 'within-child deficit', but as the responsibility of the school to develop the best fit for the child using the available resources. This is consistent with the theme of my revised book and it is hoped that teachers and management will appreciate the need for training in order to provide all staff with an awareness of the needs of dyslexic children. Inclusion is more than an ideal, it is a process that every school needs to be engaged in and every child has the right to experience. With understanding, informative training, resources and commitment this ideal can become a reality.

Dr Gavin Reid is a consultant to the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching based in Kuwait. He is also educational psychologist to REACH Learning Center in North Vancouver, Canada and a director and consultant to the Red Rose School for children with specific learning difficulties in St Annes on Sea, Lancashire. Gavin will be speaking at nasen Live 2013 on the subject of dyslexia and inclusion. The revised version of his book *Dyslexia and Inclusion* is featured in our reviews section on page 49.

Reviewing dyslexia

Four years on from his report on the teaching of children with dyslexia, Sir Jim Rose considers the impact of his recommendations in conversation with Sean Stockdale



Sir Jim Rose

Sir Jim Rose was formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMI). He was appointed Director of Inspection for the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in 1995. He retired from Ofsted in July 1999 and has since acted as a consultant and as an independent reviewer of government enquiries into the teaching of reading, dyslexia and the primary curriculum.

He has held headships of two large, inner-city primary schools. His senior posts within HMI included Chief Inspector of Primary Education (3–13), responsibilities for special educational needs, the education of ethnic minority pupils and initial teacher training. He was a member of the 1990 Committee of Inquiry into the Education of 3 and 4 Year-Olds. In 1992 he was invited by the Secretary of State to be a joint author of the *Three Wise Men* report on primary education. He has advised several overseas governments on school inspection and has considerable international experience of school educational systems. He has undertaken educational assignments for the World Bank and for the British Council, for example in Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, the USA and South America, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

At the request of the then Secretary of State for Education, Jim led several independent reviews, including a Review of the Teaching of Early Reading (2006), a Review of the Primary Curriculum (2008) and a report on the Teaching of Dyslexia (2009). He is President of the National Foundation for Education Research and Chairman/Trustee of the CfBT Education Trust.

What were the circumstances that led to the commissioning of the Rose Review on the identification and teaching of children with dyslexia (2009)?

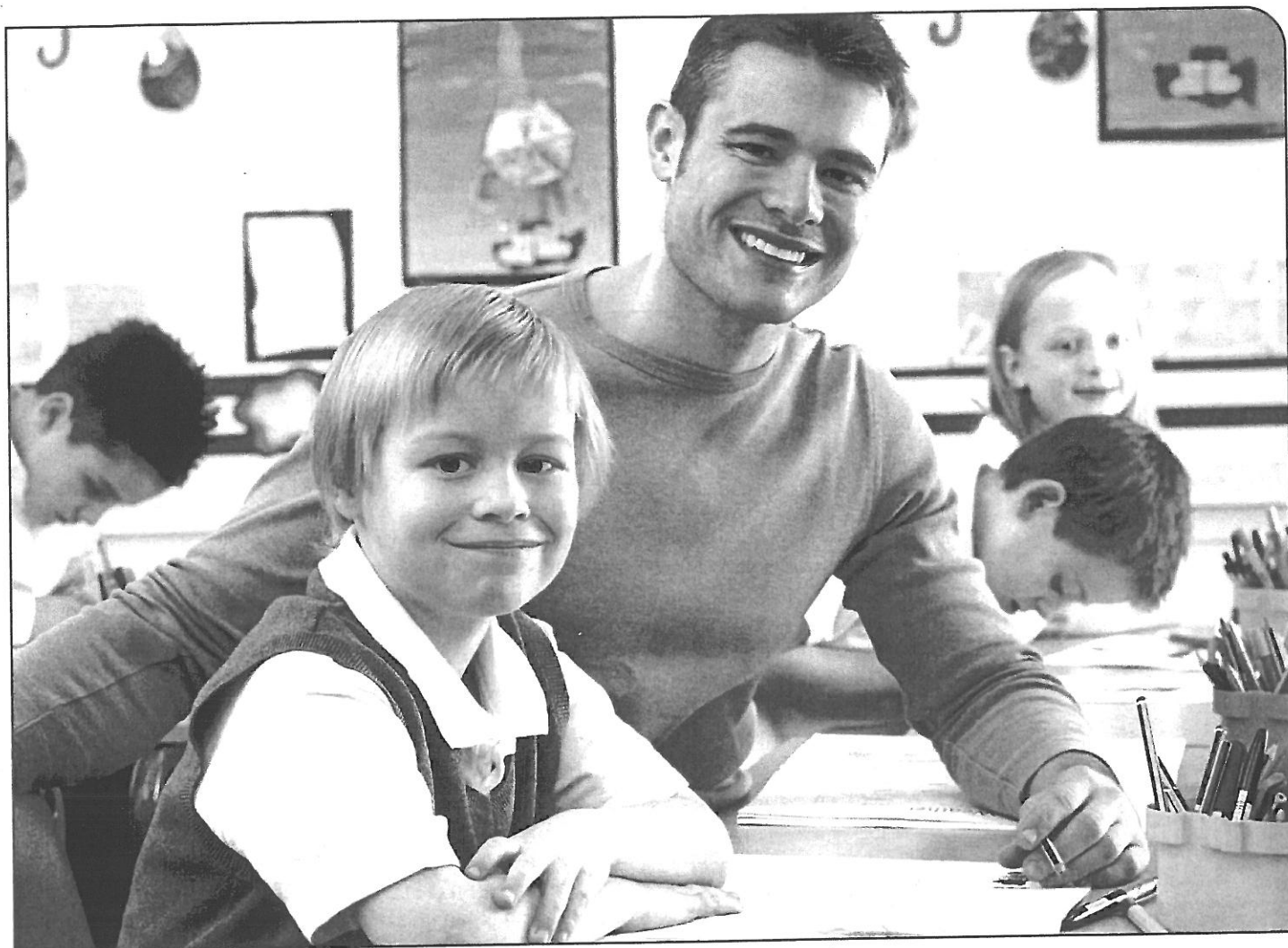
There was a lot of pressure to respond to the concerns of parents about the perceived lack of attention to dyslexia. It was really on two levels – many parents did not understand the provision available at that time but there was also a strong voice from those who had tried their very best to get support for their children and were just not getting it. They were concerned and rightly so. And, of course, I'd done the reading review and it had raised awareness about certain aspects of reading and the model that we could use and it was beginning to have an impact on the nature of special needs within that whole framework of reading difficulties. There was also quite a lot of concern about the impact of interventions like Reading Recovery and how well they would actually achieve what they set out to do. There was another report also current at that time called *No Child Left Behind*.

What did you want to achieve by doing the review?

Basically what I was trying to do was clear away a lot of the confusion that surrounds definitions. What is dyslexia, does it exist? There is still a lobby that says it is not a useful term, but historically I think it is because it does point you in the direction of those pupils who, despite really good teaching, still don't get it and fail to make progress in reading. To deny that they exist seems to be totally nonsensical as it is an international issue. We are able to describe it in much more sensible terms even though we recognise that it is not a single condition. It is a messy condition however you describe it, as it seems to run across co-occurring difficulties. As a result of the report, certainly in my mind I feel a good deal clearer about where the breakthroughs are going to come.

During the review you had a specific remit but what was the impact on you personally?

It took me into a lot of interesting areas, such as who was doing front-line research into dyslexia, who in this country >



> was talking sense. I was quite pleasantly surprised. The people with whom I was working on the advisory group were enormously helpful, so we were not without expertise.

What would you identify as the key successes stemming from your review?

Things have moved on since the report that aren't necessarily related to it, positive developments in research and so on. One of the metaphors often used about dyslexia is that it is like the blind men and the elephant – they describe it differently depending on how they come to it.

There is a now great deal of coalescence between what the concerns and difficulties are. Neuroscience and cognitive psychology have moved on at a great pace and between those two areas we are going to get some quite interesting things. We are beginning to uncover fascinating patterns in the brain that are clearly to do with reading difficulties and we know that some of this is inheritable.

The review would have meant nothing if we hadn't said that the system needed an injection of expertise. We do need to up our game by putting more well-qualified people

in schools. It is hardly a new recipe – if you look at reports on maths or reading or whatever, there is always a call for more training and continuing professional development. We were just not paying enough attention to what teachers need to know when they encounter a child in this territory.

As a result of the review, the Government committed £10 million to fund specialist teaching and support for schools and parents, which equates to 4,000 places, but my concern about that is how well were they trained and did we put enough effort into training the trainers?

Why are some schools still struggling to provide appropriate provision for students with dyslexia?

In this territory you need a whole-school response led by somebody who knows what they are doing. It does seem to me that many children who find it hard to read are instructional casualties rather than dyslexics – they are just not being taught well enough. It might be that they are coming to school with impoverished language or a language delay but I wouldn't necessarily mark them out as dyslexic if they are given high quality teaching of reading and all that it means. I think that the first thing to

do is make damn sure that headteachers, especially in primary schools, ensure that the teaching of reading is of the highest quality. Governors have got to back them and so has the Government.

How can we create space in the system to allow schools to take a step back and look for long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes?

At the moment there is a lot of what we call 'activity in the system', where hardly a week goes by without some change or concern that teachers have to adjust to. Teachers have a lot of plates that they have to keep spinning and they are not going to read mountains of research, so they need considerable support to identify what it is they ought to give priority to.

A lot of attention is being turned towards Sure Start and I think pre-schools ought to be part of the professional development discussion. So much can be done to pave the way without offending the principles of good pre-school education. We should be considering how we use that propensity for play to empower and energise children in aspects that will lead on to reading. It is not a matter of sitting them down to learn phonics at the age of two.

If we are going to have an academised system we need to think about how schools are going to capture this expertise. It might be easier, it might be harder but we need to explore this, particularly through the door of language and communication.

What are the barriers to success?

There is a lot already in the system that if applied successfully would raise the game. We know now how children acquire language and the value of phonological awareness and so on and so forth. It seems to me that if you are a primary teacher your core professional knowledge needs to embrace the teaching of reading and writing. You need to understand that they feed off speaking and listening and you have to enrich speaking and listening for those children who come in with impoverished language. If you can hone that then you will be able to see really quickly those pupils who even with the best teaching are not getting the message. Then you can drive deeper to the diagnosis for those children, who may then require a specialist.

How did your review impact on the provision available for dyslexics?

It came at a time when there wasn't much money about. It was Ed Balls who took the initiative and pushed it through so I was really pleased to see it backed, and I hadn't expected it to get £10 million. Securing the 4,000 specialists was bound to make some difference. I had

requested to follow it up, but I just hope that the money wasn't wasted, as it was hard fought and hard won.

The report into the teaching of reading in 2006 opened up the debate as to what is important. That report helped to secure a better grip on the phonics element of reading – the straightforward encoding and decoding. Much turns on an understanding of that simple view of reading not just for phonics but also for dyslexic pupils because it deals with language acquisition and comprehension. That is a compelling model on which to build.

The dyslexia review has had many successes, but were there any missed opportunities?

If we could somehow have showcased the whole thing better through websites it would have coincided with a real national effort to train people up. One of the most interesting sayings is that 'no school can be better than the teachers who teach in it', and you can say that about any public face-to-face service – it is a truism. If you want to improve something you have to concentrate on those who are delivering the goods at the front-line. There has been a concentration on leadership but we have to make sure that the core business is of the highest quality – and that is the teacher.

Several years on from publication, where we are in relation to appropriate provision for dyslexics?

I am an optimist and a realist. If we are showing a level of progress and someone can be honest enough to give us the statistics that stand up then I would credit some of that to the work done since the National Strategies. I would include the National Strategies as whatever else they did, they picked up what I call the 'low growing fruit'. I used to visit schools and look at the teaching of reading and there was little thorough teaching of encoding and decoding.

Having looked at the curriculum in schools, is there anything you think we need to address?

One of the aspects that really taxed me when I was looking at the curriculum was how the system should change as children go through school. There is no doubt that we tend to fix the secondary system, we do something about the early years and we come to the bit in the middle last – that has been the kind of tradition. That is no way to conduct the orchestra, so we need a system that reviews itself on a regular basis but not in a piecemeal manner.

Sean Stockdale is the Editor of *Special*.