

# **PRIORY SCHOOL**

## **Policy on Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties**

1.1 The aims of this policy are to promote good practice in our detection and management of special educational needs and to explain the support we can provide for children who have learning difficulties and the co-operation we will need from parents.

### **2. "Special educational needs" and "learning difficulty"**

2.1 Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

2.2 Children have a learning difficulty if they:

2.2.1 have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or

2.2.2 have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority

2.3 A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the "language or medium of communication of the home is different from the language in which he or she is or will be taught." (Education Act 1996, Section 312(1), (2) and (3)). However, children for whom English is an additional language will be provided with appropriate support provided they meet the School's academic criteria and it is considered at admission their needs can be met within the resources available.

2.4 A child who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a "learning difficulty" in the legal sense of that expression; there will often be disparities in the speed with which children learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen. Priory School is a small family school, and the small class sizes do create a supportive context where the speed of learning of the individual child is taken into account. Children will always be in their appropriate class by age, but subject setting is done to tailor the level of work to abilities. A recent Isle of Wight Medical report cited Priory School as a "good, nurturing school" in the care it gives pupils with special needs.

2.5 The expression "learning difficulty" covers a wide variety of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from emotional or behavioural disorders. The expression may also include those who have problems with their eyesight or hearing or who have an autistic spectrum disorder.

2.6 Learning difficulties may affect children who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and ability. Sometimes a child's learning difficulty becomes apparent for the first time at the age of 11+ or older, when the educational pressures tend to increase.

### **3 Policy statement**

3.1 Priory School is a mainstream independent day school with high academic standards which accepts boys and girls from the age of 5-18 years. Even so, we carry out assessment tests on each pupil prior to admission and during their school career, in order to detect signs of learning difficulties or indeed specific academic needs, where apparent from the test results.

3.2 The provision which we can make for children who appear to have a learning difficulty includes: learning support; remedial teaching, and referral to an educational psychologist for a formal assessment.

3.3 We will do all that is reasonable to report and consult with parents about their child's learning difficulties and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a child's learning difficulties and that teaching practices are appropriate.

### **4 Implementation and procedures**

4.1 Screening test: Prior to admission and during a pupil's school career, we will carry out assessment and screening tests, the results of which will be reported to you. The tests which we use are not diagnostic tests of a kind which an educational psychologist would carry out, and they are not infallible. The purpose of the assessments and tests is to detect circumstances which give rise for concern, may need further investigation, or indicate a formal assessment would be helpful. The cost of these tests is included in the tuition fees.

4.2 Outcome of tests: If the outcome of a test or any other circumstances give us reason to think that your child may have a learning difficulty, we will report and consult with you as necessary and make recommendations.

4.3 Formal assessment: If the test results indicate that your child may have a learning difficulty which ought to be assessed without delay, we will ask you to agree to your child being formally assessed by an educational psychologist or Speech and Language Therapist and we will ask you to agree to follow his/her recommendations unless there are persuasive reasons to the contrary. You may consult an educational psychologist or Speech and Language Therapist retained by the School, or one of your own choice. The cost in either case must be borne by the parents.

4.4 Remedial teaching: As an alternative, and if justified by the test results, we may suggest a course of remedial teaching by a qualified specialist on a one-to-one basis in school. This would normally be in term time, payable by parents as an extra which would be added to the bill.

4.5 Half a term's notice in writing (or payment of half a term's fees in lieu of notice) is required to terminate remedial teaching. Fees paid for remedial teaching will not be refunded.

4.6 Learning support: If the test results indicate that there may be a learning difficulty but the circumstances are not such as to indicate an immediate formal assessment or a course of remedial teaching, we may suggest that your child gives up one of the normal curriculum subjects, or receive in-class assistance, or attend a small learning support group which will concentrate on developing skills such as phonics, spelling, maths and handwriting. Learning

support of this kind will be provided at no additional cost. Your child's progress and needs will be monitored and, if necessary, we will recommend a formal assessment or alternative support if in-class learning support does not appear to be meeting your child's needs.

4.7 Code of Practice: Our approach to the detection and management of learning difficulties will be guided by the Special Educational Needs code of practice (DfES/581/2001), Department for Education and Skills (DfES), November 2001, or any substituting or amending Code of Practice issued from time to time by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In general, our approach will be cautious so as not unnecessarily to run the risk of a child being labelled "dyslexic" when a later assessment might result in a different explanation for the difficulty or where such labelling would be detrimental to the child's welfare.

4.8 Statements: Parents have the right under s 329(1) of the Education Act 1996 to ask the local education authority to make an assessment with a view to drawing up a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The School also has the right (under s 329A) to ask the LA to arrange an assessment. The School will always consult with parents before exercising this right. If the LA refuses to make an assessment, the parents (but not the School) have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

4.9 Where a prospective pupil has a Statement of Educational Needs, we will consult the parents and, where appropriate, the Local Authority to ensure that the provision specified in the Statement can be delivered by the School. We will co-operate with the Local Authority to ensure that relevant reviews of Statements are carried out as required.

4.10 Any additional services that are needed to meet the requirements of the Statement will need to be charged, either directly to the parents, or the Local Authority if the Authority is responsible for the fees and our school is named in Part 4 of the Statement.

4.11 Welfare needs: The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties may be at risk of being bullied. The School has an anti-bullying policy which make it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously. If parents are concerned about their child's welfare they can approach the pupil's form teacher or any senior member of staff to discuss their concerns in private at any time.

4.11.1 Mrs Marie Bartlett is the School's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) along with Mr Edmund Matyjaszek the Principal. They have responsibility for:

4.11.2 ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of a child's special educational needs;

4.11.3 advising and supporting other staff in the School;

4.11.4 ensuring that appropriate Individual Education Plans are in place;

4.11.5 ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special education needs is collected, recorded and updated;

4.11.6 undertaking any other appropriate duties in accordance with the Code of Practice on special educational needs.

4.11.7 Liaising appropriately with the Local Authority for the purpose of the annual reviews of statements and the use of funding if applicable.

4.12 Responsibility: Parents bear the overall responsibility for taking decisions about the management of their child's learning difficulties. A parent who would prefer to have a formal assessment instead of remedial teaching or learning support should make arrangements accordingly with the School or outside but must ensure that we are given copies of all advice and reports received.

4.13 External teaching: Parents may opt for remedial teaching outside the School, provided that the Principal is satisfied with your child's safety and travel arrangements and also that the remedial teaching is at times which fit in with the remainder of the curriculum, timetable and community life of the School.

4.14 Information: Because dyslexia and some other learning difficulties are often inherited, we need to know at the outset if you (either parent) or your children or close relations have been affected by a learning difficulty at any time. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. You must also provide us with a copy of any report or recommendations which have been made in relation to special educational needs at your child's previous school or elsewhere in his/her school career.

4.15 Concerns: We need to know immediately if your child's progress or behaviour causes you concern so that we can devise and agree a strategy with you and carry it out.

4.16 Examinations: Children who have been diagnosed as having a learning difficulty may be eligible to apply for extra time to complete internal examinations and public examinations. You are asked to liaise with your child's form teacher/tutor in good time with respect to this.

## **5 Alternative arrangements**

5.1 Withdrawal: We reserve the right, following consultation with you, to ask or require you to withdraw your child from the School if, in our opinion after making all reasonable adjustments and exhausting appropriate strategies:

5.1.1 your child is in need of a formal assessment, remedial teaching, learning support or medication to which you do not consent; and/or

5.1.2 you have withheld information from the School which, had the information been provided, would have made a significant difference to the School's management of your child's learning difficulties; or have for whatever reason been unable to ensure attendance in either class or in separate provision that would allow the program of support agreed on to be delivered and/or

5.1.3 your child's learning difficulties require a level of support or medication which, in the professional judgment of the Principal, the School is unable to provide, manage or arrange;

5.1.4 your child has special educational needs that make it unlikely he/she will be able to benefit sufficiently from the mainstream education and facilities which we provide.

5.2 Alternative placement: In any of these circumstances we will do what is reasonable to help you to find an alternative placement which will provide your child with the necessary level of teaching and support.

5.3 Financial: Withdrawal of a pupil in these circumstances will not incur a charge to fees in lieu of notice. The deposit paid in respect of your child will be credited to your account.

## **SEN STAFF**

All SEN staff are fully CRB checked and have received appropriate Child Protection Training.

Mr E J Matyjaszek - (Acting) SENCO  
Miss Karen Ledward - Literacy Support  
Mrs Jeannette Sheridan - Maths Support  
Mrs Beverley Jessup - SLT (Speech & Language Therapist)  
Mrs Diane Etherton - SLT Support Assistant  
Mrs Sarah Luke - Dyslexia Support

Authorised: EJ Matyjaszek, Principal

Date: January 12th 2010 (revised 6 May 2010)