

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.9 Learning Support Policy**

#### Introduction and Aims

The primary aim of the Learning Support Department is to support the school in its core purpose of encouraging each pupil to achieve the highest standards possible and the greatest fulfillment from his/her particular academic skills and to focus also on the general educational principles which will support wider learning. The school respects the individuality of each pupil and is committed to helping pupils overcome any barriers to learning that they may encounter.

The Learning Support Department aims to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and disabilities and to assess, record, monitor and evaluate their progress to ensure that it is comparable to other pupils of the same age and ability. We believe that this involves a proactive partnership between learning support staff, other teaching and pastoral staff, parents, pupils and other professionals. We offer assessment and advice, plus individual and small group teaching for pupils experiencing difficulties. Intervention is planned and structured to meet individual need. Consultation with parents and pupils forms an important part of this process.

The Learning Support Department aims to look beyond exam success and consider how to engage and motivate learners and create in them an appetite to learn. Fostering the habits and attitudes that best support learning and developing the skills, which allow pupils to apply their knowledge, and understanding confidently are central to the work of the department. We believe that active learning, the ability to question and make connections and to review and assess one's own progress are essential learning skills and ones in which Learning Support pupils are frequently deficient.

The department considers that supporting teachers in their day-to-day roles within the classroom, communicating information about pupils and providing advice and training about the needs of particular learners is an important part of its work.

#### Context

The legal framework within which additional assistance is provided is set out in the SEN Code of Practice in the Education Act 1996 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. The SEN Code of Practice states that "A pupil has a learning difficulty if he or she a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of pupils of the same age b) has a disability which either prevents or hinders the pupil from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for pupils of the same age." Discrimination under the 2005 act can take place in two ways: a) treating a disabled pupil or prospective pupil less favourably for a reason relating to his or her disability, than someone to whom that reason does not apply, without justification or b) failing to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils or prospective pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with their non-disabled peers without justification. This is known as the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

The school selects pupils for entry on the basis of their academic ability and breadth of interest. It is equipped to deal with mild learning difficulties but, due to the academic pace and the small size of the Learning Support Department, the school is not able to accommodate pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

There are currently 2 pupils in the school with statements of Special Educational Need. There are 98 other pupils in the school who are on the Learning Support Register. This includes pupils with indicators associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficits and obsessive compulsive disorder. Between 10 and 20 pupils per year qualify for special concessions in public examinations. Between 5 and 12 pupils per year are granted concessions to word process public exams.

### Staff and Responsibilities

The person responsible for coordinating the provision of Learning Support in the three schools, which form the UCS foundation, is Robyn Spencer, the Director of Learning Support (DLS). She has regular meetings with the Learning Support teacher at the Junior Branch and the Senco at the Phoenix School. In the Senior School she reports to the Academic Deputy Head, Simon Marshall, over matters of learning strategy, with the Headmaster taking overall responsibility.

The responsibilities of the DLS in the Senior School are as follows:

- Overseeing the screening of all new pupils
- Drawing up and updating a Learning Support Register (LSR)
- Coordinating provision for pupils on the LSR
- Maintaining the records of pupils on the LSR
- Conducting annual reviews of pupils on the LSR
- Liaising with and advising the parents of pupils on the LSR
- Providing tutorial sessions for individual pupils
- Communicating with and advising fellow teachers about individual need
- Supervising the use of laptops by certain pupils on the LSR
- Gaining permissions for access arrangements in exams and consulting with examinations officers over special arrangements for public examinations.
- Contributing to the in-house training of staff and the induction of new members of staff
- Liaising with external agencies (e.g. educational psychologists)

From September 2009 the DLS will be supported by one Learning Support Teacher, Tracey O'Neill, who has particular responsibilities for the Entry and Shell year groups. Her main focus is to support the organisation and literacy skills of pupils who have been identified as experiencing difficulties in these areas. She also assists in the screening of new pupils in Entry and Shell. Tracey works three days a week as a Learning Support teacher and two days a week as a Learning Support Assistant to one of our two statemented pupils. She also supervises the physiotherapy exercises of the other statemented pupil.

In addition a Learning Support Assistant, Mat Doran, has been appointed for the academic year 2009 to 2010, to work for three days each week with one of the statemented pupils.

## Accommodation

The Learning Support Department has exclusive use of a spacious room accessed from the crypt. This is used by the DLS for individual support and for group sessions for pupils and for teachers. Tracey O'Neill has shared use of a room in the crypt near the Year Wardens of Entry and Shell. She holds some sessions in the Lower Library and some in classrooms as available. As part of our development plan we are seeking to find more suitable accommodation for Tracey.

## Resources

The department has built up an extensive collection of printed resources and self-generated information and worksheets. It also has copies of schemes of work and of many of the standard textbooks used by pupils and an extensive range of assessment tools.

The department's annual budget currently stands at approximately £17,000. This covers homework diaries for all pupils within the school, plus teacher diaries as well as resources and consultancy for the department and the provision of typing courses for the Entry year group.

## Outside Agencies

The department consults with Andrea Smollan (educational psychologist) once a term and may refer pupils to her for assessment. Sarah Geiger (educational psychologist) has also taken referrals and assisted with staff training.

Stephanie Egerton (teacher specialising in assessment of SpLD) undertakes the majority of our assessments to provide evidence for special access arrangements in public examinations.

Where problems in the visual system are suspected, referral is made to Simon Barnard & Associates (behavioural optometrists) or to the Institute of Optometry at the Elephant & Castle.

Referrals have also been made to Maximum Potential (a pediatric occupational therapy practice) the LearnWrite Centre in Nottingham, which specializes in retraining handwriting and the New Learning Centre in West Hampstead which gives advice and training in matters related to learning and parenting.

## Identification

Our policy is to screen all new pupils, at whatever age they enter the school, in order to identify literacy weaknesses and highly discrepant scores which might be indicators of a learning difficulty.

## English as an Additional Language

The school aims to provide equality of access to the curriculum for all its pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language. It aims to ensure that the

language and learning needs of all pupils are identified and that they are supported in overcoming any obstacles that might prevent them from achieving their full potential.

The term EAL is normally used to describe pupils who have experienced less than two years schooling in an English-speaking environment. The number of UCS pupils for whom this is the case is very small. For those who are in this position their main need is the development of specialized, subject-specific vocabulary. In the year 2009-2010 we have one EAL pupil who entered the Transitus year group in September to study Maths, Physics and ICT.

We have no specialist EAL unit or EAL teacher, but are prepared to arrange and fund specialist provision tailored to individual need.

Information about EAL pupils entering the school is passed by the admissions secretary to the pupil's Deme Warden and Form Teacher and to the Director of Learning Support.

The screening tests taken by all new pupils in the first half of the Autumn term, and in particular the Edinburgh Reading Test 4, are helpful in identifying levels of need for EAL pupils.

- Where an EAL need is identified the pupil is added to the Learning Support Register so that all teachers are clearly informed of the need.
- Arrangements are made for the use of extra time and the use of bi-lingual dictionaries in tests and exams.
- Advice is provided to teaching staff on strategies that may benefit the pupil.
- Teachers provide time for one-to-one sessions outside normal lesson time to help to check understanding and provide additional explanations.
- The pupil is placed on 'Update reporting' to ensure very regular feedback on his/her progress.
- The pupil has regular mentoring sessions with learning support to ensure that his/her needs are being met.
- Access to a specialist EAL teacher is arranged by the school, as the need arises.

### Transition from the UCS Junior Branch

The DLS has access to data used for tracking all pupils in the Junior Branch and makes use of this data when pupils transfer to the Senior School. The Learning Support files of pupils in Year 6 at the Junior Branch who have received individual help, or are on the Junior Branch Learning Support Register, are passed to the DLS during the second half of the summer term. This information is shared with the Entry Warden. The parents of those on the register are contacted and these pupils are placed on the Senior School register for the following year.

### Admission of New Pupils

Feeder schools are asked to give details of any special learning requirements when supplying information to support an application to UCS. To qualify for extra time and/or the use of a word processor in entrance exams UCS requires a statement of support from the pupil's current school and evidence from an appropriately qualified professional (specialist teacher or educational psychologist).

The parents of new pupils entering the school are asked to give details of any special need or disability which might affect learning, on their registration forms. Where relevant these are passed to the DLS by the admissions secretary. The parents are contacted and, where appropriate, they are added to our Learning Support Register.

### Screening

All new pupils are screened for specific learning difficulties during the first half of the term in which they enter the school. As part of our development plan, we are investigating the possibility of screening pupils earlier as part of their induction process. Parents are informed about the procedure by letter and where a pupil's profile shows unusual features, they are invited to a meeting to discuss possible courses of action.

All new pupils take the ***Edinburgh Reading 4*** test. The test gives a breakdown of scores for skimming, vocabulary, reading for facts, understanding points of view and comprehension. Pupils with a reading age of below 13 years are provided with a minimum of 10 sessions of individual support to improve their reading comprehension. Entry boys with low overall scores are invited to join an early morning reading group, which meets weekly from the second half of the Autumn term to the first half of the Summer term. The reading scores for Entry pupils are distributed to the Entry Warden and to the relevant members of the English and History departments. This test is also used to help identify pupils whose first language is not English.

All new pupils in Entry and Lower Remove sit the ***MidYIS test***. The test is comprised of four parts: Vocabulary, Maths, Non-verbal and Skills (accuracy and attention to detail), plus an overall score. Significant discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal scores are noted as possible indicators of dyspraxia. Significant discrepancies between verbal and skills scores are possible indicators of dyslexia.

Pupils up to the age of 16 take the ***LASS Secondary*** computerised assessment. This is an eight-part test designed to identify pupils with symptoms on the dyslexia spectrum. The assessment takes about 45 minutes and a standardized graphical profile is produced.

Pupils of 16+ take the ***LADS*** computerised assessment. This is a four part adult test designed to indicate the presence of dyslexic symptoms.

Results of the above screening tests are scrutinised with the aid of an educational psychologist. Information from all the above tests is used in the creation of Learning Support Profiles in SIMS.

### Raising Concerns and Making Referrals

All staff are encouraged to discuss their concerns about the learning effectiveness of individual pupils with the DLS, or pass on concerns raised by parents. The progress of Learning Support pupils is a brief agenda item in all department meetings and a fuller agenda item once each half term. The DLS attends a meeting with each department once a year.

Concerns may be raised because a particular aspect of the pupil's learning may be out of line with the rest of their abilities and progress. Lack of learning confidence, low

motivation, poor behaviour and lack of focus are all legitimate reasons for raising concerns.

A *referral* to Learning Support is made by putting these concerns to the DLS in writing and, where appropriate, attaching samples of work. The majority of referrals come from Deme and Year Wardens who have an overview of the progress of pupils in their care.

Sixth Form pupils may self-refer to Learning Support. This is usually done on the advice of a Deme Warden or Sixth Form tutor.

The school counselor makes referrals to Learning Support where she judges that a pupil's learning competence or confidence is causing significant anxiety.

A referral will trigger an *information gathering* process involving a scrutiny of screening information and of reports, plus discussions with the pupil, a parent and a Warden.

This will result in either further monitoring or the creation of a Learning Support Profile and inclusion on the Learning Support Register (see page 11). Agreement for these actions is sought from parents and pupils and the level of support is discussed.

### Support from Teachers

The primary level of support comes from subject teachers. They are encouraged to privately acknowledge areas of difficulty highlighted in the Learning Support Profiles. They are also expected to accommodate individual learning differences in class by using their department's recommended differentiation strategies and those listed in the Staff Learning Support Handbook. In addition to this, many staff give individual consultations to pupils, outside normal lesson times, to help them overcome difficulties they are encountering with particular pieces of work.

Form teachers and Deme and Year Wardens provide some extra monitoring (through report cards and update reports) and support for pupils who experience difficulties with organization and establishing productive learning habits.

### Individual Support

Some pupils on the Learning Support Register will also require periods of individual learning support. This is planned with parents and pupils following initial screening and annual reviews and is provided free of charge.

A small number of pupils opt to do nine rather than 10 GCSEs and to have regular weekly individual sessions throughout the GCSE course.

In general individual support is offered for a limited number of sessions (up to 10 in a series), which occur at weekly, fortnightly or half-termly intervals.

A number of students at GCSE or above come for one-off consultations on the advice of a subject teacher or Warden.

Pupils in Entry, Shell and Lower Remove are withdrawn from class according to a rotating timetable. Older pupils from Remove upwards are normally seen in free periods, before or after school, or at lunchtime.

A series of sessions focuses on improving a particular skill set such as planning or editing written work, organisation and time management, taking notes, listening and following instructions, asking and answering questions and learning for tests and exams. Wherever possible material in these sessions relates closely to work the pupil has done recently, or will do in the near future to aid the transfer of skills to work in subject areas.

The sessions are based on a 'coaching' approach, which seeks to bring about change and development through questioning, emphasising strengths, and building intrinsic motivation and stamina for learning. Pupils are encouraged to set their own goals and targets and where appropriate these are shared with the relevant teaching staff.

The concerns and wishes of pupils are given a very high priority at every stage of learning support intervention. They are consulted during the information gathering stage and in the review process. They are encouraged to develop a good understanding of their learning strengths and weaknesses and to develop effective strategies for overcoming their weaknesses.

### Group Support

In the academic year 2008-9 a reading group was set up for pupils in the Entry with a low reading age (below 13 years). This met on Thursday mornings in the Lower Library and Remove pupils, doing the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, acted as reading mentors to the younger boys, helping them choose books, listening to them read and discussing their reading with them. When the Entry boys were retested in the summer term all but one of them had made gains in terms of reading age of between one and three years. This group will be continued in the next academic year.

In addition to the above group, Tracey O'Neill will run Guided Reading Groups for pupils in Entry and Shell starting in Autumn 2009. She will also be running an after school homework group for pupils in the Lower School who struggle to establish good homework habits.

### Learning Support Registers

The main instrument by which staff are informed about which pupils experience learning difficulties is the Learning Support Register. This is issued to all staff in the Staff Learning Support Handbook at the beginning of the academic year. This is updated in November, January and April and redistributed to all staff.

### Learning Support Profiles

Each pupil on the Learning Support Register has a Learning Support Profile created in the SIMS administration system and updated annually. Teachers are required and encouraged to access the profiles of those pupils on the register whom they teach, via the 'Linked documents' button. (As the process of accessing these documents has proved somewhat cumbersome, several departments have opted to keep hard copies in their department offices. A solution to this problem is being sought with the Director

of ICT and the SIMS administrator). The profiles contain information about a pupil's assessment history, details of any individual support received, the pupil's view, the parent's view and advice about their learning needs.

### Staff Learning Support Handbook

This is a booklet, issued to all staff at the beginning of the academic year. It contains the latest Learning Support Register, information about staff responsibilities and advice about addressing common problems associated with dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficits.

### Responsibilities of Teaching and Pastoral Staff

Subject teachers have a responsibility to:

- Note which pupils are on the Learning Support Register, highlight their names in mark books and check their Learning Support Profiles in SIMS.
- Discuss any concerns they have about the level of attainment, progress or engagement of their pupils with the DLS, as necessary.
- Complete update reports, commenting on specific areas, as requested.
- Plan and deliver lessons and mark work with the needs of Learning Support pupils in mind, using the advice sections in the Staff Learning Support Handbook as guidance.

Heads of Department have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that department policies and handbooks contain subject-specific guidance on how to support pupils with specific difficulties.
- Ensure that all department members follow the guidance given.
- Monitor the progress of Learning Support pupils in their subject area.
- Include Learning Support pupils as a short agenda item in each department meeting and a longer agenda item once each half term.
- Arrange a meeting of their department with the DLS once a year.
- Suggest and consult over any training deemed necessary.

Form teachers have a responsibility to:

- Note which members of their form are on the Learning Support Register.
- Read their Learning support Profiles in SIMS.
- Pass on relevant information from parents to the DLS.
- Attend Learning Support meetings as requested.
- Monitor and help to support selected Learning Support pupils through report cards and extra support with organisation.

Home and Year Wardens

- Share concerns about pupils' level of attainment, progress, behaviour and motivation and agree action with the DLS.

### Observation

In cases where focus in class, concentration and attention are the prime areas of difficulty, weekly classroom observation, followed by coaching and target-setting will be trialed from September 2009.

## Examinations

Attention is given during individual sessions to revision, exam and test taking techniques. In the second half of the summer term time is spent with individual pupils analysing and reviewing exam technique and setting future targets. In addition Robyn Spencer provides training in revision and exam technique for specified pupils on request from Form teachers and Deme Wardens. A half-day revision workshop, open to all Upper Remove pupils, is held at the end of the Spring term.

If it is judged that a pupil may be eligible for a time concession in public examinations, his parents are contacted in the summer term before the start of the GCSE course and advised about procedures for assessment. Assessment for examination concessions is not carried out within school, but referred to appropriately qualified outside agencies. Candidates who are awarded extra time are advised about how to use it in exams. Extra time is awarded in internal school exams to pupils whose reading, writing and processing speed and accuracy are judged to qualify them for concessions in public exams.

If a pupil has an external assessment of special need, or a parent has concerns that their son or daughter may be eligible, the school asks that evidence is provided at *the beginning* of the GCSE, AS or A2 course. Parents are alerted to this requirement during the process of making subject choices and responses are passed to the DLS. The school is required by the examination boards to monitor the progress of pupils with special learning needs throughout their courses and to vouch for their eligibility. Late requests for special concessions are not acceptable to the boards.

## Use of a Laptop Computer

Some pupils with specific learning difficulties may find it beneficial to use laptops for classwork and examinations. In order to use a laptop in school it is our policy that pupils have an assessment, which formally establishes the need. The pupil needs to have a typing speed at least equivalent to their writing speed. Advice on typing courses is provided by the department. Word processing in public exams must be approved by the DLS.

## Annual Reviews

Pupils on the Learning Support Register are reviewed as follows:

- Transitus and Sixth Form – first half of Autumn Term
- Shell – first half of Spring Term
- Upper Remove – second half of Spring Term
- Remove and Lower Remove – second half of Summer Term

Each review comprises a scrutiny of reports + exam results, plus discussion separately with the pupil, a parent and the Deme or Year Warden, resulting in an update of the Learning Support Profile.

## Examination Results

It is now department policy to compare the public exam results of pupils on the Learning Support Register with their MidYIS results, as a means of evaluating the

work of the department. This comparison indicates that on average pupils on the LSR achieve at least as highly as their peers in public exams and generally well beyond their MidYIS predictions.

Exam results for Maths and English are given to the DLS at the end of the Summer term to help with progress monitoring and the planning of interventions for the following year. The collating of complete sets of exam results in the summer term is an area currently being reviewed and developed.

### Reporting, Feedback and Reviews

The DLS has access to the reporting system in SIMS and can add pupils from the LSR to the list for *Update Reports* at any time. Update reports provide feedback on pupils at roughly three-weekly intervals. All pupils on the LSR receive the first update report of the year. Thereafter they can be added to the list as necessary.

The Wardens contribute information to the annual reviews. There is frequent communication of pupil information both informally (usually before school in the mornings) and formally in the Pastoral Committee Meetings.

Aside from the more formal feedback in reports and department meetings, there is much informal feedback from teaching staff, particularly within the English department. Meetings are held with the Second Head of English and the Head of Maths at least 3 times per year, in addition to the annual meeting with each whole department.

### Meetings

The DLS has weekly meetings with the Academic Deputy Head and separately with the Head of PSHE. She also has meetings at least each half term with the school counselor. She also attends all meetings of the Academic Board (Heads of Department) and of the Pastoral Committee (Deme & Year Wardens and Heads of Sixth Form). Meetings are held in the Learning Support Room with each subject department once a year to discuss matters of mutual interest. The DLS also has opportunities to make brief contributions to whole school staff meetings.

### Training

The DLS holds a meeting for all new members of staff at the start of each year to explain the duties of staff in relation to learning support pupils. The annual meetings with departments also provide opportunities for discussing pupil needs and support strategies.

Whole staff training on matters related to Learning Support are organised approximately once each year and training targeted at particular departments have also been arranged. (see development plans).

### Evaluating the Work of the Department

The work of the department is regularly reviewed in weekly meetings, plus an annual plenary, with the Academic Deputy Head. Whole school review with a member of the senior management team takes place every three years, the last one being in February 2008.

## Communication with Parents

The Learning Support Department recognizes that parents have a vital role to play in the identification and support of pupils with learning difficulties.

New parents are provided with a Learning Support Information Sheet which sets out how Learning Support works at UCS. They are also informed by letter of the school's screening policy and invited in to discuss the results, should they reveal an unusual pattern of strengths and weaknesses.

Parents with concerns about a pupil's academic progress should raise them initially with the pupil's Form Teacher or Deme/Year Warden. If appropriate these concerns will be shared with Learning Support.

Parents views are used to help build a Learning Support Profile and to review it. They may be invited for meetings with the DLS and other staff to discuss their son's progress. They can also contact the DLS by phone or email for advice about how to support their child's progress or for information about outside agencies which may be helpful.

Parents of pupils who may be eligible for special arrangements in public exams are contacted by letter and advised of the necessary procedures.

## Enrichment

The Learning Support Department is committed to contributing to the wider academic agenda of the school in the following ways:

- Hosting and chairing the 'Cosmos' lunchtime discussion clubs for the middle and lower school. These are run according to 'Philosophy for Children' (P4C) guidelines developed by *Sapere*. They are well attended, tending to attract the more academically ambitious pupils in each year group. Pupils from the Transitus and Sixth form frequently return to chair or contribute to the group discussion.
- Encouraging a culture of reading within the school through collaborating with the library on projects such as the 'Entry Reading challenge' and holding an early morning reading group to encourage the weaker readers in the Entry.
- Collaborating with the Head of PSHE to develop an awareness of study skills throughout the lower and middle school.
- Running revision workshops for the Upper Remove to increase the confidence and efficiency with which they prepare for public exams.
- Running a homework club for the lower school to encourage the development of positive homework habits.

## Links with the UCS Junior Branch and Phoenix School

Robyn Spencer attends the weekly Monday morning staff meeting at the Junior Branch and follows this by a meeting with Sarah Miller (Learning Support Coordinator at the Junior Branch). She is also frequently invited to parent/teacher meetings for pupils in Year 5 and 6 and kept fully informed of the progress of pupils receiving individual learning support sessions.

Robyn Spencer visits the Phoenix School at least twice each term and consults over any pupils causing concern and advises on the use of outside agencies.

Learning Support Policy across the three schools of the UCS foundation is developed collaboratively in order to provide a similar standard of care and a seamless transition between schools.

### Child Protection

The Learning Support Department takes full account of the school's Child Protection Policy and refers any matters of concern to the Pastoral Deputy Head, who is the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection. The department is fully aware of the protocols for working with individual pupils and recognizes that this confers a particularly important role in the identification and reporting of child protection matters.

### Use of ICT

The Learning Support Department is fully committed to the use of IT to enhance pupils' learning. We use electronic programs as part of our screening procedures; we encourage pupils who have the appropriate assessments to use laptops as their normal way of working in school and take steps to ensure that they are used in such a way as to support efficient learning; we encourage pupils to use the school's VLE and plan to upload material to it ourselves; we are exploring the use of software programs to promote good note taking. (See development plan).

### Complaints and Appeals

Complaints about special needs provision in the school should be addressed, in the first instance, to the DLS. She will arrange a meeting to discuss the issues and inform senior management.

The school will make any adjustments which are deemed reasonable to ensure that a pupil with learning difficulties or disabilities is not placed at a disadvantage. However, in some cases it may not be possible to accommodate a proposed adjustment, for example if the cost greatly outweighs the benefit.

If an individual believes that a decision under this policy has not been made correctly, they may appeal in the first instance to the Headmaster. The individual should set out in writing the grounds for their appeal and this should be sent to the Headmaster. The individual may be invited to attend a meeting at which the grounds for the appeal will be discussed. A further appeal may be made to the Board of Governors and the individual may again be invited to attend a meeting at which the grounds for the appeal will be discussed. The individual will then be informed of the governors' decision in writing. The decision of the governors will be final and there will be no further right of appeal.