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Dyslexia Aware Quality Mark

Re-accreditation visit 24th November 2021

St Thomas's CE Primary School

St Thomas's CE Primary School have been part of a cluster of schools in Bury working towards the Dyslexia Aware Quality Mark (DAQM) for the last eight years. They have attended centrally based cluster meetings and other CPD events and have hosted school specific training to support the sharing of practice. The project in school has been led by Caroline Haughton (Deputy Head teacher and SENCO) and Gail Walker (HLTA). In July 2017 the hard work of all team members, including School Governors, resulted in the school being awarded the Dyslexia Aware Quality Mark for a second time. Imposed Covid restrictions in June 2020 meant that the re-accreditation could not take place. In Autumn 2020 the assessors agreed to extend the accreditation for a further 12 months upon receipt of an updated action plan.

At Re-accreditation, the accreditors are looking to see if a school has ensured that their Dyslexia Aware ethos remains fully embedded throughout school; that they have continued to introduce more dyslexia friendly strategies; that teaching methods and resources meet the needs of children through Quality First Teaching and inclusive environments; and that any areas for improvement suggested in previous reports have been considered and action taken towards these improvements.

The school has undergone significant changes since the last accreditation. The number of children on roll has increased from 280 to over 380 and the school has had considerable building work with several classrooms being added to the school.

Dyslexia Aware Quality Mark Accreditation Visit

Emma Lees and Ellie Lorenzo were joined for the accreditation by Alison Taylor Blunt a Specialist Teacher from Salford.

General points

Since the previous validation children have continued access to forest schools, large playgrounds, and fields with outdoor provision for Nursery and increasing provision for children in the reception class. WellComm is used in Nursery as a tool to identify Speech and Language difficulties which may support Early Identification of children with dyslexia and dyslexic type difficulties. Nursery and EYFS also used Makaton to support 'total communication.'

Progress towards previous goals set from validation in 2018

The staff target and track children with dyslexia and dyslexic type needs from an early age. One of the target children has been tracked from a young age is now an advocate within the school and she is also a librarian.

The resources offered within the library are varied. They are easily accessible to all, and the librarians ensure that the library is used effectively by all pupils. The subject specific library is user friendly; each section is colour co-ordinated to match displays and books within the classrooms, making this area familiar for children with dyslexia or dyslexic type difficulties. Additionally, each subject is labelled with images so that learners can easily identify a sub-section. E.g. space and habitats. The alphabet arc is displayed in the library to aid children when using indexes. Where possible books are displayed as front facing. School have some audio books but also buy into immersive reader

How well do dyslexic learners or those at risk from dyslexia achieve?

St Thomas's is a very inclusive school. The school is a leading school for Inclusion and was one of the first schools in Bury to achieve the Bury Inclusion award. Most learners identified with dyslexia or dyslexic type tendencies, make progress in line with their peers. Examples of their work shows effective use of Alternative Methods of recording such as mind maps and floor books, allowing them to fully engage with the curriculum. No child is disadvantaged because of a learning difference. They make progress because the bespoke curriculum designed by the staff is rich and varied and allows children to independently learn and explore.

How does school address dyslexic learners' personal attitudes, values and personal development?

The personal attitudes, values and development of all students is central to the community within this school. The school has a pastoral lead who ensures that all children, including those with dyslexia and dyslexic type tendencies, receive the emotional support that they need. This includes 1:1 and group sessions. School council is used effectively to seek the views of the pupils. These are reflected through many aspects of school including enrichment activities.

The enriching curriculum designed for the diverse cultural backgrounds of every child emphasises a strong need for the children, including those with dyslexia and dyslexic type differences to engage practically with learning. A variety of teaching methods and schemes are employed to ensure children have opportunities to learn in a number of ways. (the Video Art Scheme they have introduced appears to be working well)

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Children have opportunities to engage in outdoor learning, with forest schools and educational visits celebrating individual strengths and talents academic and non-academic. As a result of this, vulnerable, dyslexic type learners' personal development is strengthened by a varied curriculum and the pressures of academic performance are significantly reduced, though this does not detract from high expectations.

Children with dyslexia and dyslexic type difficulties and their parents are very happy at St Thomas's. The children are excited by the curriculum. This is infectious and parents are very complimentary about the new curriculum that has been creatively designed by the staff to meet the diverse needs of their school community and its multi-cultural heritage.

How effective are teaching and learning for dyslexic learners and those at risk from dyslexia?

The teaching for children with dyslexia and for those at risk of dyslexia is extremely effective. The learning environment is rich with a wide range of resources available to support learning. These includes interactive displays alphabet arcs, visual timetables, and specific resources such as Dienes. The needs of the dyslexic learner and other vulnerable learners are met through quality first teaching which is reflected from planning through to delivery, assessment, and overall curriculum outcomes. The resources that are purchased throughout, are carefully matched to the curriculum and the diverse needs of the children. For example, books are scrutinised to ensure they reflect the cultural experiences and backgrounds of the children. Core readers for each year group have been carefully selected to ensure that they challenge gender stereotypes and are inline with current equality and diverse thinking across society. Pupils access immersive reader and accelerated reader.

What is the quality of the curriculum received by dyslexic learners?

The curriculum 'Where are we going and who will we meet?' has been innovatively designed to remove barriers for all learners, including those with dyslexia or dyslexic type tendencies and widen the experiences of all children. This is an ambitious, curriculum devised by highly reflective staff who through this curriculum forge stronger links with their community and give wider access to both our country and the rest of the world. The school places a high level of value upon the extensive languages that enrich and inform their learning community. There are several staff who are multilingual, supporting children and parents to access all aspects of school life. This creative curriculum also ensures that all learners are taught to a high standard and are given the best possible preparation for the next stage of education. The curriculum allows the children wide opportunities to explore learning and they are not held back in any way as they can express their knowledge skills and understanding through many different forms.

Teachers see importance of vocabulary and also how they use and sometimes over use language in the classroom- working towards consistency in strategies used throughout classes

The curriculum has now been successfully implemented throughout the school. Practitioners are now keen to see short- and long-term impact for learners in relation to the curriculum as a whole and preparation for the next stage and phase of education.

The use of IT and video based curriculum specific learner for Art and Music, also ensure that all learners including those with Specific Learning difficulties have equal access to learn and are able to thrive.

How well does school ensure equality of access and opportunity for dyslexic learners or those at risk from dyslexia?

All policies, procedures and day to day learning and teaching reflects equality of opportunity for every learning. Accessibility to all aspects of learning including enrichments activities and offsite site curriculum access is carefully planned to meet the need of every learner and no children are excluded from any experiences. Forest Schools is now an established part of the timetable. Children know that they are timetabled opportunities for forest school at different points across the academic year.

Staff go above and beyond ensuring that learners have equal access to the curriculum. This included IT equipment for homes during Covid restrictions and included teachers visiting pupils at home (in their gardens) to ensure they could fully access the learning.

How well does the school work in partnership with parents, other schools and other members of the community to meet the needs of dyslexic learners and those at risk from dyslexia?

Workshops are held for parents to support transition to different classes. These have been paused due to Covid but are due to resume next term.

In Autumn 2021 school showcased their new curriculum 'where are we going and who will we meet,' with the parents through an exciting event called 'Night at the Museum' where classes demonstrated 'where have we been and who did we meet' through display, children's work demonstrations. This also included displaying their work on dyslexia. Parents were enthused and visited many classrooms not just that of their own children. The staff have strong relationships with parents and work in partnership ensure that parents are well supported and that the young person with dyslexic type tendencies is given every opportunity to succeed.

Class Dojo was set up for communication purposes during the Covid 19 pandemic. It continues to be used as an effective form of communication. Dojo offers access to the 14 languages currently used within school which makes communication accessible to all users.

How well is the school regarded by the dyslexic learners and their parents?

Parents have very strong, positive comments about the school and what staff do to support them and their children. They were particularly effusive about the Deputy Head who they felt took the time to understand their needs as families. One parent went so far as to write to Ofsted to compliment all the staff within the school and the excellent way they have met the needs of not just her child, but other children and families.

What is working exceptionally well?

- ✓ Pupil voice
- ✓ Visual & audio support – clocks, timetables, labels
- ✓ Multisensory support for learning
- ✓ Classroom display as support
- ✓ Arts and skills given high value
- ✓ Whole school processes for writing
- ✓ Reading, including reading for pleasure
- ✓ Use of ICT as the norm including Dojo
- ✓ A diverse enriching curriculum
- ✓ The different school libraries

What might school consider in moving forward?

Floor books- Could some of these move up with the class or be stored in the library so children can view their own progress and share with younger siblings

How can they continue to pass their good practice not only on to the other academy within the Trust school- but their link high schools, their other primary colleagues on the DAQM

What else can be done to further strengthen and develop parental links?

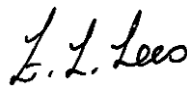
To complete outdoor learning provision for reception

Dyslexia Aware Consortium members conducting the accreditation:

Emma Lees, Ellie Lorenzo, (Bury) Alison Taylor – Blunt (Salford)

Date: 17/12/2021

Signed:



Ellie Lorenzo

Emma Lees

