

## Report from the Learning Support Department – February 2013

### a) How many boys are on the LS register?

There are currently 108 boys on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Learning Support Register, around 12% of the School overall. The numbers tend to increase higher up the School so there are only 22 boys in OG- 3<sup>rd</sup> Form but from 4<sup>th</sup> Form up the numbers increase to around 20 per year, so the percentage increases to between 13% and 25% in the Senior School.

### b) What are the main categories of needs/ learning difficulties?

The majority of the boys on the register have dyslexia, dyspraxia and/ or memory, processing or handwriting difficulties. Handwriting difficulties are common and may be associated with visuo-spatial difficulties, dysgraphia or joint hypermobility syndrome. A small number have ADHD (5%) or Asperger' Syndrome/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (7%) but Dyslexia accounts for 20% (20 boys). Another 9 boys have medical problems ranging from Hydrocephalus to Pierre Robin's Syndrome, visual impairment or hearing difficulties. 2 boys have stammers and one has Tourettes. There are currently 7 boys who experience difficulties associated with EAL and these boys are all looked after by the Head of EAL, Susy Ralph. This number is rising. There is a great deal of crossover in terms of learning difficulties and many boys are affected by more than one specific learning difficulty.

*(Dyspraxia 19 (18%), Asperger's 8 (7%) Colour blind 1 Dysgraphia 3 EAL 7 (6%) Handwriting 2 Joint Hmob 6, Processing 20, Memory 20 Motor Skills 12 Stammer 2 Tourettes 1) Medical : 9 ( Minor injury 1, Connective Tissue Disorder 1, Pierre- Robin Syndrome 1, Epilepsy 1, Neonatal difficulties 1, Hydrocephalus 1, Hearing Impairment 2 Visual Impairment 1)*

### c) The effect of new legislation and changes in exam board regulations

New JCQ exam board regulations require a score in one area of function (reading, reading speed, processing, handwriting etc.) to be more than one standard deviation below a national norm. This means that the deficit model has been removed which used to favour our boys and some are no longer eligible unless the school can provide a strong body of evidence to the contrary. The impact, in terms of admin is huge as we now have to collate far more paper evidence on boys' performance throughout the school. However, the majority of boys who really need the extra time do seem to be eligible. Other boys who perhaps needed extra time because of a slow writing speed are now encouraged to move to typing their exams as this usually means a faster typing than writing speed which compensates for the loss of extra time.

At present the legislation is in flux: the coalition Green Paper proceeded to White Paper only recently and we are awaiting a new Code of Practice for SEN, promised this spring. In the meantime there have been minor changes to legislation embodied in the Equality Act of 2010 which mean schools are now obligated to pay for Reasonable Adjustments and must be fully aware of Equality law with regard to pupils and staff with SEN. This awareness must be incorporated into the School's Accessibility Plan or written into an Equality Plan.

The legislation also extends to Admissions and increasing Accessibility means that we have more successful applicants with more complex difficulties which represent a challenge! There is now a greater emphasis on whole school SEN responsibility, the new mantra being 'every teacher is a teacher of SEN'. Therefore, as a department we are also responsible for raising staff awareness of all types of specific learning difficulty and appropriate teaching methods.

Needless to say, the new regulations and legislative changes have led to a massive increase in the administrative load as evidence has to be updated frequently in readiness for public exam Access Arrangements, exam inspection, and school inspection and for boys changing schools or applying to universities, some of whom require an application for the Disabled Students' Allowance. Due to the steep increase in fees in the UK many boys are making applications to American or European universities which require comprehensive evidence of SEN in order to facilitate exam arrangements and continuing support at university.

### **d) Access Report (July 2012) and Updating our Accessibility Plan (this summer)**

In July 2012 Access Advisers from the Corporation's Department of the Built Environment audited the School building and in October 2012 they audited Grove Park, to ensure that the School provides people with disability or learning difficulties equal access to the building and facilities. Their Key Recommendations (5 pages for the School and one page for the Playing Fields) were prioritised and the Facilities Team is currently working through them, as and when time and finance permits. The Recommendations range from general house-keeping and refurbishment to new furniture and safety arrangements. This will take several years and major funding.

The Second Master, who line manages the Head of Learning Support and the Facilities Manager, is also updating the School's Accessibility Plan with their help and a new Plan will emerge this summer for the new edition of the Staff handbook. This is a work in progress and takes into account new legislation, the needs of the boys and the advice of the specialists in this area.

### **e) Change in personnel in the Learning Support Dept.**

As of September 2013 we will have 2 full-time teachers and one part-time on 2/3 days per week. The new teacher is fully qualified to carry out diagnostic assessments but also comes with experience of teaching Physics which will be of enormous benefit to the department, increasing the range of support we can offer. We currently have two teaching rooms available but as of September we will have access to a third to maximise our teaching potential.

The Department's structure will revert to one Head of Department and two assistant members as opposed to having one Head specialise in the younger age group and one in the older. In this way there will be greater consistency of approach.

**Amanda Ross Scott and Gary Griffin**