

## **Learning difficulties**

### **Definition**

A child has a '*learning difficulty*' within the meaning of the *Education Act 1996* if s/he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age; or a disability which prevents or hinders him/her from making use of educational facilities generally provided for children of that age. This policy explains the responsibilities we are able to accept, the support we are able to provide and the responsibilities of parents in relation to students who may experience learning difficulties.

### **Background**

Learning difficulties may affect children who have a high IQ as well as those of lower academic ability. The expression '*learning difficulty*' covers a wide variety of conditions and may include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder and semantic processing difficulty. It may also include those who have problems with their eyesight or hearing.

### **Screening for all students**

Schools have a responsibility both for the physical well-being and the educational needs of students while in the care of the school. For this reason and also as a matter of good practice, we have introduced a system of testing all students for learning difficulties. The cost of initial testing (but not the cost of any subsequent assessment) is included in the termly fees. Each new student in Year 7+ will be tested during his/her first year here.

- It is important for parents to understand that these are 'screening' and not diagnostic tests. At best, they may reveal the need for a formal assessment to be carried out by an educational psychologist.
- A child's learning needs can change over time. Therefore, each student may be re-tested at the appropriate level at two or three yearly intervals or at an earlier stage, if cause for concern is expressed.
- Testing will be conducted in a classroom environment. Unlike some other kinds of tests, they are not competitive and no specific preparation is required or beneficial.

### **Outcome of screening**

If a learning difficulty is suspected, we will communicate with parents after discussion with staff and may recommend referral to an educational psychologist/or a specialist teacher. In every case the decision as to the course of action will be that of the parent, with advice from the school if required. We will also provide the following information:

- The names of an educational psychologist or specialist teacher for advice and/or formal assessment.
- The likely cost of the referral will be borne by the parents.

### **Special educational provision**

The school at present makes the following educational provision for a small number of students with mild learning difficulties:

- Qualified learning support coordinator on teaching staff.
- Employed or visiting special needs teachers – to provide some additional support by taking younger children out of class in lesson time. Extra English tuition instead of a second foreign language in Year 9 is offered after discussion with staff.
- To provide additional or remedial teaching at extra cost inside or outside the normal school day.
- Small group teaching if recommended by the school is provided for Years 1-9.

Further details of this provision and its cost to parents will be provided at the appropriate time.

The right is reserved following consultation to require parents to withdraw a child from the school in any case if, in the opinion of the Head:

- the child is reported to be in need of assessment or additional or remedial teaching or medication to which a parent does not consent
- the learning difficulties require teaching or medication which, in the opinion of the Head, the school is unable to provide or manage
- the student has special needs that make it unlikely s/he will be able to benefit sufficiently from the mainstream education and facilities provided at the school

Withdrawal of a student in these circumstances would not incur a charge of fees in lieu of notice. Deposit paid in respect of the child would be credited to the account.

The cost of formal assessments, professional advice, additional or remedial teaching and extra costs incurred for special examination/invigilation procedures is payable by parents in addition to normal fees and half a term's notice (or payment of half a term's fees in lieu) is required to terminate remedial teaching. Fees paid for additional or remedial teaching will not be refunded under any circumstances.

Parents may opt for remedial teaching to take place outside the school, provided the Head is satisfied with all the arrangements, including travel, timing and delivery to the student of the remainder of the curriculum.

### **The liability of the school**

Unless negligent under the terms of this policy, the school accepts no responsibility to the student or parents caused by or arising out of any failure to detect or refer a learning difficulty or other condition or situation of special need.