

Language and Literacy Centres (LALs)



Overview

West Berkshire has two Language and Literacy Centres (LALs) that provide additional support and provision for pupils attending mainstream schools. These pupils will usually have Specific Learning Difficulties (dyslexia/literacy) as their primary need. The provision is designed to allow pupils to make progress in reading and spelling as well as enhance their self-esteem and confidence. Each LAL provides specialist teaching for one two-hour session a week, starting in September and finishing in June. It is for pupils in Year 5, each LAL takes 24 pupils.

The pupils who will be seen as potential candidates for LAL will be those who have not made progress in acquiring literacy skills despite appropriate, targeted, and sustained provision within their school. Applications for a LAL place must be submitted by the pupil's school following discussion with the Cognition and Learning Team (CALT), the pupil, and their parents/carers during Year 4.

The LAL panel meets annually in the summer term to allocate placements for the following year. Schools will be notified of the closing date for applications for LAL, the date of the panel, and whether or not the pupil has been offered a place.

Eligibility Criteria

The admission criteria for LAL is based on The Delphi Definition of Dyslexia (2025):

Nature

The nature and developmental trajectory of dyslexia depend on multiple genetic and environmental influences.

Manifestation

Dyslexia is a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling. The most commonly observed cognitive impairment in

dyslexia is a difficulty in phonological processing (i.e. in phonological awareness, phonological processing speed or phonological memory). However, phonological difficulties do not fully explain the variability that is observed. Working memory, processing speed and orthographic skills can contribute to the impact of dyslexia.

Impact

In dyslexia, some or all aspects of literacy attainment are weak in relation to age, standard teaching and instruction, and level of other attainments. Across languages and age groups, difficulties in reading fluency and spelling are a key marker of dyslexia.

Variance and co-occurrence

Dyslexic difficulties exist on a continuum and can be experienced to various degrees of severity. Dyslexia can affect the acquisition of other skills, such as mathematics, reading comprehension or learning another language. Dyslexia frequently co-occurs with one or more other developmental difficulties, including developmental language disorder, dyscalculia, ADHD, and developmental coordination disorder.

Carroll, J.M., Holden, C., Kirby, P., Thompson, P.A. & Snowling, M.J., the Dyslexia Delphi Panel (2025). Toward a consensus on dyslexia: findings from a Delphi study. [Online]. Available from: <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcpp.14123>

Pupils will be considered at panel if they meet the following criteria:

1. Difficulties with **reading fluency and spelling** - a standard score of 89 or less in a standardised reading test and will also usually have difficulty with spelling.
2. Difficulties in phonological processing (phonological awareness, phonological processing speed or phonological memory). Additional difficulties may be seen in working memory and with orthographic skills.



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3. Is likely to **respond to a structured, cumulative, multisensory intervention.**
4. Usually have **SpLD as their primary need.**
5. Usually have a **level of ability within the range expected in a mainstream school.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Where are the LALs?

West Berkshire has two Language and Literacy Centres (LALs) which are based at The Winchcombe School and Theale C of E Primary School.

What support is provided?

Pupils attending the LAL receive a teaching programme that follows a structured, cumulative, multisensory approach with opportunities for overlearning. This is considered to be the best practice in improving dyslexia/literacy difficulties. They attend LAL for one two-hour session per week.

What qualifications/experience do staff in the provision have?

There is one Teacher in Charge of each LAL and they have Qualified Teacher Status and a Post Graduate qualification in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia).

What training and support are offered to mainstream staff?

The Teacher in Charge provides training to the teachers and Teaching Assistants of those pupils attending LAL. The training takes place in September when school staff visit the LAL (before the teaching sessions begin). This enables them to support the pupil with ongoing reinforcement and overlearning in their school.

Are parents/carers charged for the provision?

There is no charge, the provision is funded by the local authority.

How are places allocated?

Applications to the LAL Panel are made by the pupil's school. The panel meets in the summer term of each school year to decide which pupils will have a place for the following year. The Panel is usually made up of:

- The Teachers in Charge of the LALs
- The Cognition and Learning Team
- The Learning Support Services Manager

Pupils who meet the criteria cannot be guaranteed a LAL place; decisions will be made by the panel based

on need. It is the responsibility of the referring school to inform the parents whether or not their pupil has been offered a place at LAL.

What transition process do you have?

Before the teaching sessions start, the LAL Teacher will visit the pupil in their school then the parent(s) and pupil are invited to attend a group information session in the LAL classroom. After the teaching sessions finish, a report is provided by the LAL Teacher, which includes ongoing recommendations or post-LAL support.

What are the transport arrangements?

Pupils are transported to and from their school to the LAL by taxi. The taxi companies used are organised and vetted by West Berkshire's Transport Services Team. All drivers have full DBS checks and mandatory Safeguarding and Disability Awareness training.

How long is a LAL session and what is the teacher-to-pupil ratio?

One LAL session lasts two hours and takes place once a week. There are three pupils in each LAL group. Pupils will attend either during the morning or afternoon and will attend on the same day and time each week (during term time).

How are the pupils grouped in the LAL?

Pupils from the same school may be in the same teaching group. However, a group may consist of pupils from three different schools, the pupils soon get to know each other and feel comfortable.

What support can parents/carers provide at home?

Specific information will be provided at the Information Sessions held in September to enable parents/carers to support their child at home.

When do the teaching sessions start and finish?

LAL begins in September of Year 5 and continues through the academic year until the first week of June.

How will progress be assessed?

Pupils will be assessed in reading and spelling skills before, during, and at the end of their attendance at LAL to measure their progress in literacy skills.

What happens after LAL?

Schools are advised on how to continue to support the pupil during year 6 so that they can continue to make progress.