

SEN AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES POLICY

Pupils at Tonbridge School who fall into this category tend to have either a specific learning difficulty (most commonly dyslexia) or English as an additional language (EAL), but rarely both. We have not had any pupils with a formal statement of educational needs in recent times but would consider future applicants on a case by case basis.

Identifying difficulties

Tonbridge School has a Learning Support Department in which the Head of Department will read through the school report on all in-coming pupils to identify pupils with known or suspected learning difficulties. In addition, on arrival all Novi are given an assessment, part of which is dictation of a passage and the other is comprehension of the dictated passage. An analysis of the performance on this paper gives all staff a list of all boys in the Novi, ranked by the number of mistakes made, plus a brief comment on the performance, where noteworthy. All Novi take MidYIS tests early in their career and an asymmetric profile in the four skill areas often indicates a possible learning difficulty which can be followed up.

The Learning Support Department also keeps in close touch with the English Department during the pupils' time up to GCSE in order to pick up on pupils who might have fallen through the earlier "net".

At the suggestion of the school, some pupils are referred, via their parents, to an Educational Psychologist for more formal assessment. This is particularly so for pupils who need extra time in examinations. On receipt of such information, the Exams Officer will deal with all the necessary arrangements for affected pupils.

All overseas pupils have the level of competence in English assessed shortly after arrival by the EAL specialist.

Raising staff awareness

Pupils with an identified learning difficulty, or indeed a medical issue, are identified on all set lists available to staff with a tick in the relevant column, though not on copies which can be printed out, for reasons of confidentiality.

Staff can then access more detailed information about the nature of the difficulty via the staff page of the intranet. The Director of Studies encourages all teaching staff to make sure they are aware of the identified difficulties, especially in report writing seasons or for parents' evenings.

A very small number of boys have a Personal Education Plan, put together by the Learning Support Department, the details of which are given to the boy's teachers.

Dealing with pupils with learning difficulties

The Learning Support Department identifies those pupils who would most benefit from individual support either for SpLD or for EAL. Such pupils are withdrawn from a normal timetabled lesson for that support and the ten day cycle facilitates this. Some boys take one less subject than their peers to give time for both these support lessons and for extra work in the remaining subjects.

In years where the demand for individual support outstrips the supply of staff time from the two specialist teachers, then the Head of Learning Support prioritises those boys in their GCSE year.

It is rare for a pupil in the Sixth Form to require, or to be given, individual learning support for SpLD by the department. However, many of the new overseas sixth formers, particularly those from the Far East need and receive EAL support in preparation for their IELTS test. The IELTS test is a test of competence in English required by some UK universities for EAL candidates.

For those boys whose level of difficulty is not so severe as to require regular on-going individual support, informal drop-in clinics are available for 40 minutes twice per week during Pursuits Periods in which boys may ask for specific individual help by the member of staff on duty in the department.

Some pupils are granted extra time in examinations by the Learning Support Department. This extra time, usually 25%, is also made available for internal school exams as well as public exams. Extra time in public examinations can be granted by the School but the Learning Support Department prefers the backing of a formal report by an Educational Psychologist. In these cases, there are procedures required by the Examination Boards which have to be followed.