

SPECIAL NEEDS BROADSHEET

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EDITORIAL

At the start of a new academic year we thought it was worth asking the question, 'Are you still in the cupboard?' We know, having spoken to many of you at various courses and conferences over the last year, that this is a topical issue. All schools have different needs and where we, as Learning Support teachers, sit within our schools also varies enormously. We would really appreciate feedback on this and any other points you would like us to raise in future broadsheets.

Continuing our series of articles on Outside Agencies we conclude with two other agencies we use regularly. Both these professionals are unique and we feel so lucky to be able to tap in to such centres of excellence. Do hope you find similar ones in your areas!

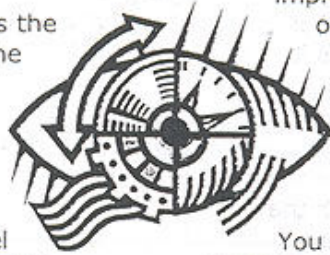
In this broadsheet we have decided to branch out a little and mention a few organisations we subscribe to, as well as publications we receive. It is all too easy to sit in isolation and we feel it is vital to keep abreast of the latest thoughts and policies. Do let us know what publications you use; it is always good to share ideas.

Lucy and Frances

It has recently been found that children who have specific learning difficulties often have specific visual problems. Dr Grounds would say that these are often not picked up in a conventional eye check which is only assessing the ability to see fine detail.

What she is looking for is the irregular movement of the eyes when following an object under stress, difficulties in changing focus from distance to near and the change in eye position from parallel at distance to convergent for near.

Having had an assessment, a child is given specific daily exercises. We are often involved in supervising these during the



week. These exercises are very varied and cover areas such as memory, listening skills, hand-motor sequencing and concentration. They are modified as the child makes progress.

From our point of view it has been fascinating to see the improvements in a child's overall performance, not only in areas of literacy such as reading but in their self esteem and general attitude in and out of school.

You will find more clinics are opening around the country and it is worth finding out if there is one near you.

CPOC can be contacted at
Tel: 01206 744669

The Learn-Write Centre

The Learn-Write Centre, based in Nottingham, is a centre of learning which provides for all ages. It has been developed over the last sixteen years by Pamela Heather and during the last few years we understand people have visited her from all over the world.

Mrs Heather supports children in a number of areas and we have referred children with severe handwriting problems.

Although it may seem a long way to travel, all those we have sent have felt it was worthwhile. After an initial assessment day, having previously sent off various samples of work, you return for your main session, where Mrs

Heather works on re-programming the child's handwriting.

It is quite remarkable how even those children with short concentration spans respond to her way of working and remain on task for several hours! Frances has taken her own son and has witnessed this first hand. Her comments are that Mrs Heather is 'quite unique', a view that is shared by many other parents who have been through the programme.

Having had this re-programming session, the child only carries out specific writing exercises given by Mrs Heather for the next week. It is therefore important to work

with the school when arranging these appointments. Our staff have been most accommodating and we have scribed for the children where necessary.

There is one final appointment at the end of this non-writing week where Mrs Heather assesses progress and irons out any small difficulties that have arisen. For the majority of children this is it, but for those with severe dysgraphia there may be more visits required.

We cannot emphasise enough the amazing results we have seen here at Orwell Park School. Over the years we have sent many children, some of whom have had totally illegible writing and the staff have despaired of

ever being able to decode what they put on paper. The Learn-Write Centre has transformed the lives of these children but, as Mrs Heather says, to achieve this both children and their parents must be committed and realise the importance of the daily exercises which serve to re-programme the brain. Everybody has got to believe the child will succeed!

THE LEARN-WRITE CENTRE
Tel: 0115 972 3046

**Lucy Rowan Robinson and
Frances Golding**

Publications and Associations

For this Broadsheet we thought we would tell you about some of the publications we subscribe to as well as associations we belong to.

Special Children – the essential package for anyone involved with children who have special needs - from nursery to post 16.

Teaching and Learning – a relatively new magazine aimed at Key Stage 1-3 teachers and support staff. Includes case studies on teaching methods, ways to enhance learning skills and how to meet curriculum goals. A CD-ROM provides support for continuous professional development.

Teaching Thinking and Creativity – raising standards of teaching and learning by

developing children's thinking skills.

To subscribe to any of the above call Questions Subscriptions Hotline 0121 666 7878. A subscription to any Questions title includes access to a dedicated subject-specific website offering a wealth of additional information.

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