A meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia took place on Tuesday 20th March 2007 at 2 pm at the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
CROSS-PARTY GROUP ON DYSLEXIA

1. Welcome and Apologies

Rosemary Byrne welcomed everyone to the meeting. A list of those present and apologies received is attached.

Rosemary said that the Cross-Party Group had made quite an impact and said that this was down to everyone involved with the Group. Rosemary said that she hoped the Group would continue to thrive long into the future. She said that she hoped the Group will continue to look at the faculties of education and the input of dyslexia at teacher training level and also the take-up of Continuing Professional Development on dyslexia within schools. She said that the Group should look more at adult education and, in particular, at the Further Education colleges and the difficulties they face supporting people with dyslexia. Rosemary also hoped that the Group would continue to work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and ask it back to a future meeting to give an update on its work.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Kathleen Clark asked for an amendment to the last bullet point within Item 4 - Dyslexia in Transition to be changed to Dyslexia at Transition.

The minutes, with the amendment, were accepted.

Proposed by Kathleen Clark
Seconded by Meg Houston

Moira Thomson explained that with the Parliamentary elections coming up, all Cross-Party Groups will be de-registered and all online papers removed from the Scottish Parliament website. She said that she was pleased to report that Dyslexia Scotland is now hosting archived papers for the Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia on its website. This will ensure accessibility for all and continuity for the members of the Group.

Moira Thomson and Rosemary Byrne thanked Dyslexia Scotland for its support and assistance with this. Rosemary suggested that, in time, the Group may decide to have its own website.

3. Matters Arising

Jim Connelly said that the minutes did not fully reflect the meeting. He felt that the Deputy Minister had been given a number of weeks in which he could have prepared his responses to the questions the Group had put to him but what he gave at the meeting were standard replies that did not answer the questions adequately and that the minutes of the last meeting did not report this expressed view. Adam Hannah, in support of this point, reiterated what Jim had said as regards the Deputy Minister’s preparation and comments.
Jim then referred to a specific section of the minutes that mentioned a comment from Mary Evans who said that the "Minister had listened to the Group". Jim said that some members of the Group felt differently, that individual people had made contributions to the discussion that had not been minuted and indicated comments made by Libby Bingham and Anna McGee. Jim said that he did not know why their input had not been included. Anna McGee was asked to recall her points but she said she could not.

Moira Thomson said that she had chaired the last meeting and that the minutes were a note of what had been discussed, not a detailed report of everyone’s contribution. She said that Minutes had been sent out to members two weeks prior to this meeting and that if anyone had been unhappy with the content they had had ample time to contact her. She said that it is customary for the chair to indicate when an individual contribution should be recorded as such, but that all comments and discussions at that meeting had not gone through the Chairperson. Instead people were talking over each other, jumping in on discussions and not identifying themselves resulting in few actual comments being repeated by the chair for minuting. She said that there is a protocol for speaking at meetings and this was not followed. The minute taker was commended for the excellent job she had done in sorting out the content of discussions and the consensus of those present. It was agreed that contact through the Chair must be established.

4. Introduction of Guest Speakers

Rosemary Byrne introduced the guest speakers from Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMie): speaker Kate Hannah, HMI, Assistant Chief Inspector Elisabeth Morris, Anna Boni HMI.

5. Presentation by Guest Speaker from HMie

Kate Hannah provided an overview of the inspectorate review that is taking place which would evaluate the educational provision for children with dyslexia in Scotland. She explained that HMie will be writing to all authorities to get their support for the Inspection on Dyslexia. Authorities have been asked for the definition of dyslexia being used, their teaching policies and a list of those who have specialist qualifications. A copy of HMie’s PowerPoint is attached.

6. Questions to Speakers

Rosemary Byrne said that some parents have an issue about the assessment process and that HMie does not necessarily ask their views when inspections are taking place. She asked if HMie looked at these assessment processes as part of its investigations.

HMie replied that the questionnaires used at inspections can be requested by parents to give their views if they have not been asked to contribute via their school. HMie would hope to pick up on how needs are identified when carrying out their inspections. It would do this by looking at documentation then visiting children in class to observe whether information collated is being followed through.

Rosemary Byrne asked if the same follow-through would happen with the identification and assessment of needs.

HMie said that when inspecting a school it uses information that is provided by schools and questionnaires that are distributed. Inspectors also talk to the children. By doing this HMie can pick up on details not already provided within the papers supplied by the school. It said it also has its own assessment materials that it can use for the 5-14 curriculum.
Adam Hannah asked why it was not reasonable to expect every parent to take part in the sampling. He said that he did not understand why all parents are not involved as it would increase the value of the process.

HMIe explained that all parents receive a letter notifying them of the details of an inspection. This letter would include information as to how a parent could obtain a questionnaire to give feedback if they so wished. HMIe said that it feels the sampling process is sufficient to give a overall view of what is going on.

Anna McGee explained that the Cross-Party Group had conducted its own survey. She said that one element of the feedback came from Directors of Education saying that they had policies on dyslexia. It would be a dangerous assumption to presume that these same policies are a true reflection of what is happening on the ground - parents can testify to the contrary. What the Group’s survey had also found was that information was provided about the range of good practice. She said that if that was the case why do we need this Group - something is amiss.

HMIe replied that it needs more information on this area. It needs to know more about what is on paper and what is happening on the ground and it hopes the inspection will highlight some of this.

Meg Houston described situations that occur in her region where dyslexic children are suffering despite support being in place. Some children end up being taken out of a mainstream school and sent to a private school because their needs are not being met. These same schools get glowing reports from HMIe. She said that schools can have support and ICT help available but it is the lack of understanding from teachers that is the greatest problem and it is this which will most likely disable a dyslexic child in school. She said that HMIe will not find what it needs to if it is only going to follow paper trails.

HMIe said that its inspections are not about paper trails and policies. They are about impact. It said that there is also the issue of what dyslexia is, as even experts are still divided on that issue. Part of HMIe’s national task is to look at that area and at the working definition of dyslexia. HMIe would hope that every child could expect to have consistent education which should not differ from school to school.

Libby Bingham said that she was surprised to hear that HMIe was not so sure what dyslexia is and that it justifies teachers not using appropriate interventions. She said that a big question mark should not be put on the existence of dyslexia in Scotland’s education system. Teachers should not be able to take that view.

HMIe explained that it is the experts that are divided on the question of the existence and validity of dyslexia, not HMIe. It is confident that it recognises dyslexia.

Adam Hannah asked what inspectors do when they go into a school. He wanted to know if they ask about how many dyslexic children there are in that school, what HMIe does to follow through on the children and parents and how much expertise it brings when looking at dyslexic children and examining the school.

HMIe said that it does not ask for specific figures, it does audit trails. The team obtains information from the schools and looks at documentation such as PPRs. This is then followed through to speaking to individual children or children in groups and assesses the situation if necessary.

Colin Williamson then gave a résumé of his experience as a dyslexic adult, what he experienced at school and at university and how it affects him today.
He said that from what he had heard today it would seem that there had not been huge changes and that he felt teachers had to be trained to recognise dyslexia.

Rosemary Byrne asked if all 32 authorities now recognise dyslexia and why there is such an aversion to the use of the word ‘dyslexia’ in the education field. She wanted to ask if things were improving.

HMie explained that models of dyslexia have changed. It explained that Inspectors are moving into classrooms and spending less time with paperwork. HMie is more focused on the pupils in the classrooms and the impact education is having on them. It was explained that a lot of information can be obtained from just observing pupils’ education and also speaking with teachers and the pupils.

Adam Hannah then said that he believed HMie was colluding with the secrecy over dyslexia. He asked what qualifications HMie had to identify the teaching processes, assessment and identification of dyslexic children.

HMie replied that there is a list of every member of the team who is trained in additional support for learning and that it has a strong background in dyslexia. HMie does recognise that it needs to continue to develop its skills.

Jim Connelly asked how HMie can inspect schools then provide reports on the structures and buildings but does not pick up that teachers are not trained to teach dyslexic children. He said that the teachers are not capable or equipped in this area.

HMie explained that it has a number of people within its team. If there was a problem then colleagues with expertise could be called upon to pick up on specific areas where there might be cause for concern. If teacher training was highlighted as an issue then HMie would look at that.

Anna McGee suggested that looking at the statistics of the number of pupils identified might be helpful. She said that, on average, there would be around 10% of pupils found to be dyslexic and this would be a good bench mark as to whether schools are picking up on dyslexia. If the statistics came back saying 2% then this, being most unlikely, could be investigated further. If the figures say 25% then again there is something going on that would warrant further investigation.

HMie explained that the Scottish Executive publishes figures which are produced from the annual census which gives information on the number of pupils identified with additional support needs. It is freely available for anyone to look at from the Scottish Executive’s website. Adam Hannah commented that the figures are under-reported ten-fold.

Marie Lockhart gave a brief explanation of the work she has been doing as the National Co-ordinator with Dyslexia Scotland, funded by the Scottish Executive. In the course of visiting 25 of the 32 local authorities, several issues had been highlighted. It appears that some local authority personnel use the policy of inclusion to dumb-down dyslexia. Limited opportunities for all teachers to have appropriate in-service training, including some with specialist knowledge of dyslexia, is also a cause for concern. Rather than assessment and early identification of specific learning difficulties being viewed as a means of ascertaining the nature and level of intervention required, this can be interpreted as ‘labelling’, construed as being negative and unhelpful. Marie continued that whilst awaiting the publication of HMie’s review in 2008, it is important to be pro-active and adopt a solution-focused approach to consider how these and other issues, which have already been raised in the 2004 National Audit and through this project, can be addressed.
HMIe said that their survey reports are just beginning to come back. So far, it is encouraged by the good practice out there. There are examples available for it to see what is being done. HMIe has identified some excellent practice and is sharing this.

Glenda Hannah said that she was devastated to hear that there is to be a fourth survey of schools and authorities. She asked if there was no joined-up thinking. She said that there has been 10 years’ worth of surveys and things have not moved on. She explained that she has a glowing inspection report from her local school. She believes the support is inadequate and that parents are carefully picked for interviews with HMIe when inspections take place. She said that children are told to be careful what they say so that they do not let the school down and that parents are cautioned about how they reply back to the questions.

HMIe said that it heard what Glenda was saying but HMIe does try to get the parents' and children's views. HMIe also speak to parents via other agencies and voluntary groups and reiterated that parents can also provide their views direct to HMIe.

Glenda replied that if HMIe keeps inspections within schools it will not get an objective evaluation. She said that there must be an independent way in which parents and children, in a non-threatening environment, can have their say.

Libby Bingham said that when HMIe inspect a school it would have an idea of what children should be achieving. A dyslexic child may have high potential. She wanted to know how HMIe would know what appropriate achievement is for that child. She said that standards can be established for 'normal' students but not for dyslexic students.

HMIe replied that if it were shown that children had stuck on a particular level this would immediately be highlighted.

Rosemary Byrne thanked all three guest speakers, on behalf of all members of the Cross-Party Group, for taking the time to come along and address the audience. She said that it had been extremely interesting and she was sure the Group would have learned much.

7. Any Other Business

Moira reminded members that if they know of anyone wishing to join the Group they should contact her or do this via Sharon.

8. Details of Arrangements for Dissolution and Re-registration

Moira Thomson wished to thank Rosemary Byrne, Margaret Mitchell and Mark Ballard for their input into the Cross-Party Group over the past couple of years. She wished Rosemary the very best for the coming elections.

After the elections in May, and if Rosemary is still in seat, the necessary paperwork will be completed to re-register the Group. Moira Thomson will find another person to do this if Rosemary is unavailable.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm
Cross Party Dyslexia Group 20 March 2007

**MSPs**
Rosemary Byrne MSP  Co-Convenor

**HMie**
Elisabeth Morris  Assistant Chief Inspector
Anna Boni
Kate Hannah

**Non-MSPs**
Duncan Cumming  Chief Executive, Dyslexia Scotwest
Stuart Lucas  Scottish Council for Independent Schools
Libby Bingham  Dyslexia Ayrshire
Kathleen Clark  Strathclyde University
Catriona Collins  Independent Trainer, Edinburgh
Jim Connolly  Dyslexia Ayrshire
Fiona Dickinson  Dyslexia South West Scotland
Mary Evans  Dyslexia Scotland - Chair of Council
Glenda Hanna  Dyslexia Ayrshire
Adam Hannah  Dyslexia Ayrshire
Meg Houston  City of Edinburgh
Anna McGee  Caledonian University
Liz McKelvie  East Renfrewshire Council
Fran Ranaldi  Kinross High School
Sheena Stewart Teague  Dyslexia Scotland South East
Gary Waddell  Prison Education Service
Margaret Watson  Learning Teaching Scotland
Pamela Deponio  Edinburgh University
Colin Williamson  Adult Dyslexic
Moira Thomson  Secretary
Sharon Duncan  Minute Secretary

**Apologies:**

**MSPs**
Peter Peacock MSP
Elaine Smith MSP
Margaret Mitchell MSP  Co-Convenor

**Non-MSPs**
Alasdair Andrew  Dyslexia Scotland South East
Sue Bullen
Allan Cowieson  North Ayrshire Council
Dr. Margaret Crombie  Dyslexia Scotland
Martin Davies  Dyslexia Forth Valley
Katy McFarlane  Scottish Child Law Centre
Mani Rao  Speech & Language Therapist
Liz Rodger  Dyslexia Scotland Adult Network
Bill Sadler  Independent CPD Provider, Morayshire
Rosemary Hannah  Dyslexia Ayrshire
Evaluation of the educational provision for children with dyslexia in Scotland

Eilidh Smith
Kate McNab
Anne Bond

How will HMIE evaluate educational provision for children with dyslexia in Scotland?

- The range of provision throughout Scotland including specialist services;
- The range of good practice which exists;
- Make recommendations for improvement to the service provision (Autumn 2006)

How will HMIE evaluate educational provision for children with dyslexia in Scotland?

- Authority survey-range/look of provision
- Good practice identified
- Literature review
- Task team (all sectors) to visit authorities
- Advisory group

Evaluation of provision through inspection

- Provision of professional advice
- Categorisation around QIs
- Audit trails
- Identify strengths-development needs
- Strengths lead to identification of best practice
- Weaknesses lead to a series of recommendations
- All reports include follow through published on website

How does HMIE promote best practice?

- Monitoring implementation of the legislation
- Sharing best practice (publications/conferences)
- Inspections in HIGOS
- Effective joint working: systemic approaches (reviewed)
- National specialist
- The Journey to Excellence

Promoting best practice

The Journey to Excellence describes best practice as follows:
Staff and other professionals involved in providing integrated services to children work together to identify specific needs.
Staff build their planning of young people's learning experiences round the needs of the individual.
Parents are confident in contributing ideas, expressing concerns and making suggestions.

Involving parents, children and young people

- Focus groups
- Interaction with individuals
- Questionnaires
- National tasks with specific focus
- Samples of work
- Contact details