

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Reviewed September 2019

Intent

At Robsack Wood Primary Academy we are proud to offer the pupils a text rich learning environment where imagination and creativity can be fuelled. Through our rigorous phonics curriculum, we ensure pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop as confident readers who have a love of books. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; only pupils who learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are able to effectively participate in wider society.

To achieve this, we ensure that:

- there is a sharp focus on ensuring that younger children gain the phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read and spell
- reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer
- a rigorous, sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading
- at all stages, reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils
- at the early stages of learning to read, reading materials are closely matched to the learners' phonics knowledge

There are four **key concepts** that we teach to all pupils, these are:

1. Letters are symbols (spellings) that represent sounds.
2. A sound may be spelled by one, two, three or four letters:

dog	street	night	dough
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3. The same sound can be spelled in more than one way:

One sound – different spellings			
rain	break	gate	stay

4. Many spellings can represent more than one sound:

One spelling – different sounds		
head	seat	break

There are three **key skills** that we teach to all pupils, these are:

1. Blending: the ability to push sounds together to build words.
2. Segmenting: the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words.
3. Phoneme manipulation: the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words. This skill is necessary to test out alternatives for spellings that represent more than one sound.

In order for all pupils to make rapid progress through the cumulative stages of our programme, we adopt a mastery approach where pupils quickly progress through the units. Teachers rapidly identify and plug and gaps in knowledge and/or skills already covered, while at the same time, moving on to teach new code knowledge and understanding of the concepts (we view 75-85% accuracy as sufficient for pupils to move on).

It must always be remembered that phonics is the step up to *fluent word recognition*. Automatic and effortless reading of all words is the ultimate goal. By repeated blending, segmenting and manipulation of words, pupils get to know them, and once this happens they should be encouraged to read them straight off in reading text, rather than continuing to sound and blend them aloud because they feel that this is what is required.

Implementaiton

Throughout the Academy, we adopt a quality first synthetic phonics programme, with a linguistic approach. This provides a comprehensive system with which we teach reading, spelling and writing throughout the primary years. We have carefully selected our phonics programme to meet the needs of our most vulnerable pupils by taking a phonographic approach, which means we start with what all pupils acquire naturally and right from the start: the sounds of their own language. We teach that letters, or combinations of letters, called graphemes are the agreed ways in which we represent these sounds. A key part of our programme is the reduction of the cognitive load, which can lead to particular groups of pupils not making rapid progress.

Our focus is on long term learning by: practicing the skills, learning the code and enhancing conceptual understanding. These aspects will be encountered again and again throughout carefully designed cumulative programmes.

Pre-Initial Code (throughout Early Years)

Prior to beginning the Initial Code, activities concentrate on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness and the key skills of oral blending, segmenting and manipulation. These experiences are intended to be used as part of a broad and rich language curriculum that has speaking and listening at its centre, links language with physical and practical experiences, and provides an environment rich in print and abundant in opportunities to engage with high quality books. This phase paves the way for pupils to make a good start when they begin the Initial Code.

The Initial Code (Reception)

From the very start of Reception, pupils begin to learn the Initial Code (Units 1-11) using the key skills to read and spell CV, CVC, VCC, CVCC, CCVC, CCVCC, CVCCC and CCCVC words. Lesson structures 1-5 establish a clear structure for the teaching of phonics sessions, prioritising word building whilst also teaching the key skills. Alongside, pupils are taught high frequency words ("words that you find in books") which may use alternative sounds or spellings that pupils will not yet have encountered as part of the programme, but are likely to encounter in their reading (e.g. *is* and *the*).

The Extended Code (Year 1 and Year 2)

This is a continuation of the Initial Code, but moves pupils on to vowel digraphs (Units 12-50). Units are taught in blocks of common sounds, which are later returned to and extended in a systematic way. Lesson structures 6-10 build upon the lessons taught in the Initial Code, whilst extending skills and concepts. The consistent underlying approach enables pupils to make links and develop their skills and knowledge highly effectively.

Polysyllabic Words (Year 1 onwards)

Lesson structures 11-15 teach the following key skills:

- **Segmenting:** separating words into syllables and taking each syllable in turn and segmenting it into sounds
- **Blending:** blending sounds into syllables and in turn blending syllables into the word

The **key knowledge** taught is:

- some words are made up of more than one syllable
- the spelling of some common syllables, such as prefixes and suffixes
- some polysyllabic words contains “schwas”

We begin with teacher led sessions (Lessons 11-12), and the move to pupil led sessions (Lessons 13-14) and eventually onto analysing polysyllabic words (Lesson 15) as the pupils become more proficient. These session are taught at least weekly, in addition to the Code.

We understand that new sounds learned may only be held in “temporary custody” and pupils require many opportunities to rehearse and consolidate before they are ready to use sounds learned to write independently. For this reason, pupils are not asked to spell using code that is new to them. Instead, pupils revisit prior learning for the writing component of their sessions.

Early reading

As pupils move through the Initial Code, they will be reading materials are closely matched to the learners’ phonics knowledge. In this way, pupils will be encouraged to use their phonics skills and knowledge as their primary reading strategy. As pupils find that they can decode words quickly and independently, they will read more and more so that the number of words they can read automatically builds up. Increasing the pace of reading is an important objective. Pupils will be encouraged to read aloud as well as silently for themselves.

As pupils progress through the Extended Code, many pupils will begin reading longer texts with more complex words independently and with increasing fluency.

This process culminates in a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Pupils then move on to reading both for pleasure and for information.

Meeting the needs of all

The timeline set out above will always be adjusted and adapted to meet the needs of all learners and to ensure that every child gains the building blocks they need to become a successful reader. Where a pupil continues to need to support with their developing phonemic understanding at Key Stage 2, this will be provided through targeted interventions. Careful thought will always be given to the provision of appropriately structured work for pupils with SEND, often through intervention groups. Our approach is multisensory: oral rehearsal followed by listening, and then the physical process of writing.

IMPACT

Throughout the teaching sequence, teacher assessment is used to identify pupils who are not grasping 75-80% of new learning. These pupils are targeted for rapid intervention.

In Reception, pupils will be assessed termly on the Code they have been taught.

In Year 1, a mock phonics screening is carried out on a termly basis to identify individual gaps in knowledge and understanding, as well as any systemic gaps.

We use Phonic Tracker from Reception to Year 2 to support our analysis of individual pupil’s progress.

As pupils begin to learn to read, they move to banded books and their progress through the bands is carefully tracked and analysed. PM Benchmarking is used to identify particular strengths and weaknesses and next steps.

National Phonic Screening

All pupils in Year 1 will be have a national phonics screening check, which is carried out in June each year. Any pupil who does not attain the required standard will repeat the screening in Year 2. This is to ensure that all pupils have a secure foundation upon which to build their reading skills.

Policy Status and Review

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