2023

Phonics Principles

Becton School
Together We Can

Scope

These principles are applicable to Becton School, part of Nexus Multi Academy Trust. The 'Phonics Principles' document should be read in conjunction with the 'Quality of Education Principles' and 'Feedback Principles documents.

Aims and vision

Becton School's vision is to be a teaching centre of excellence for pupils with complex SEND.
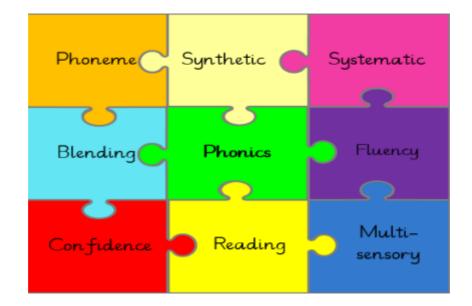
Intent

At Becton School we are committed to the delivery of excellence in the teaching of Phonics. We believe that all children should begin to acquire the knowledge of synthetic phonics as soon as it is appropriate for their stage of development. At Becton School we aim to develop each child so that they are able to read for pleasure and will allow them to move onto developing higher order reading for meaning skills. Pupils, staff and parents understand how our school will support pupils with medical conditions / needs and they are properly supported to allow them to access the same education as other pupils. At Becton School there are 3 separate provisions and each provision works with a different cohort of pupils and are based on different site. Therefore, the planning and teaching of phonics is different for each cohort in order to meet the pupil's individual needs.

Being able to read is the most important skill children will learn during their early schooling and has far-reaching implications for lifelong confidence and well-being. The independent review of early reading conducted by Jim Rose confirmed that 'high quality phonic work' should be the prime means for teaching children how to read and spell words.
As a school, we commit to one systematic synthetics phonics program; Read Write Inc. however if pupils / patients are using a different government approved program at their host school we work with their host provision to follow their scheme to avoid confusion for the pupil.

As a hospital school Becton teaches pupils from the age of 5-18 with a wide variety of medical and SEMH needs. Therefore, some pupils will be continuing their journey. Pupils are identified and then receive individual support through targeted intervention, this ensures each child progresses through the program and succeeds in learning to read and thus gain the ability to read to learn.

These phonic skills need to be taught systematically and involve a variety of resources e.g., multi-sensory resources for all learners.

Our children are entitled to a Phonics curriculum which enables them to:

- Gain a progressively deeper understanding of the phonetic structure of the English language.
- Apply their phonic knowledge and skills to decode unfamiliar words fluently and accurately.
- Read rapidly to apply what they have learned across the whole curriculum.
- Create fluent readers, confident speakers and willing writers.
- Develop a life-long love of reading.

IMPLEMENTATION

In line with the school's policy and commitment to excellence in Phonics, each pupil that is identified as needing to learn phonics will receive discrete lessons each week and phonics will also be part of teaching and learning throughout other curriculum lessons on a regular basis with all school staff having fidelity to the programme. The structure of each lesson and the journey of phonics enables all aspects of the blending and segmenting of phonemes/graphemes; lessons are uniquely planned and tailored to meet the needs of each of our learners. The teacher provides stimulating experiences and opportunities to motivate the child, using a range of resources to engage them.

For all Ruby Lodge pupils and primary age/stage pupils on all sites, on admission, communication takes place between the pupil's host school. Information is shared regarding the child's phonics programme they are receiving and at which level they are at. Phonics is then planned to meet their learning needs at an appropriate level and continues the work they have already established. If there is no prior information due to Covid, attendance, lack of engagement, illness etc. the Read Write Inc Entry Level Assessment will take place once the pupil is on the engagement pathway and a starting point can be established.

For secondary age pupils at Emerald, Sapphire, once they have reached the engagement learning pathway and are well enough to engage in assessment, a WRAT assessment on entry is undertaken on entry to the school. At Chapel House all pupils complete a WRAT assessment as part of their integration to the centre. Pupils that are in the lower 15% i.e., their WRAT reading or comprehension scores are below 85 will be identified as needing a phonics screening assessment. Following the phonics screening assessment, they will then be placed on an intervention programme using Fresh Start appropriate to their current achievable level.

APPROACHES TO PHONICS

We believe that phonics teaching should be:

- Systematic
- Discrete
- Interactive
- Practical
- Engaging
- Multi-sensory
- Differentiated

TEACHING AND LEARNING

They follow the cycle of 'Assess, Teach, Practise, Apply' to ensure that children are consolidating phonic knowledge and skills over time and that they are able to apply them in context. Consequently, wherever possible, links between phonics knowledge and understanding are made to learning in both Reading and Writing. These lessons proceed at pace and incorporate a wide range of practical and interactive learning opportunities to engage the children. These learning opportunities are carefully chosen to ensure that children develop their skills in aural discrimination and phonemic and rhyme awareness, blending and segmenting as well as grapheme-phoneme correspondence.

All teachers have completed initial training in a range of resources to use which are appropriate for the level at which the children are working - either Read Write Inc. or Fresh Start. They include practical resources such as the alphabetic code poster, sounds frieze, grapheme tiles, magnetic letters and phonic strips etc, which should be used in every lesson to create a point of reference. These resources can be added to so that children are continually engaged with their learning. There should also be age and phase appropriate displays in both classrooms and intervention rooms to support the teaching and application of phonics in Reading and Writing. Training continues throughout the academic year and Quality Assurance of teacher knowledge and skills is undertaken and managed by the Phonics Lead.

The alphabetic code

All readers should be taught four skills:

- grapheme–phoneme correspondences (that is, the alphabetic code) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- to synthesise (blend) phonemes (sounds) in order through a word to read it
- to segment words into their constituent phonemes for spelling
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.

Correct articulation

Correct articulation is vital in helping children to learn to blend sounds together. We make sure that the sound produced (each individual phoneme) is as precise and accurate as possible and that no additional sounds are added. For instance, the sound /m/ that starts 'mother' or is embedded in 'impress' needs to sound /mmmm/ and not /muh/. The clearer the sound, the easier it is for a child to blend together (synthesise) the individual sounds to read a word because there are no unnecessary sounds getting in the way.

Common exception words

Children will be taught to read words that are not completely phonically regular, in line with Read Write Inc we refer to them as 'tricky words'. Children need to be taught to read these words on sight, so that they do not have to spend time puzzling them out. Teachers help children to practise their speedy recall of tricky words. In terms of spelling, children need to remember the tricky parts of a word, that is, the letters that do not match the usual grapheme-phoneme correspondences they have learnt. For example, the word 'said' is not phonically regular in that the sound /e/ in the middle of the word is normally written 'e' as in 'bed' (or sometimes 'ea' as in 'bread', 'dread' or 'read' – past tense) and not 'ai' as in 'paid'. However, the sounds at the beginning and end of 'said' are represented with 's' and 'd', just as one might expect; it is only the middle of the word that is tricky.

Multi-sensory approaches

Multi-sensory learning opportunities featured strongly in high quality phonic work and often encompassed, variously, simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities involving, for example, physical movement to copy letters shapes and sound, and manipulate magnetic or other solid letters to build words. Sometimes, mnemonics, such as a picture of a sun or an apple in the shapes of 's' and 'a', were used to help children memorise letters.

Planning

The school follows the systematic approach laid out in the Read Write Inc and Fresh Start programme and utilises the Oxford Owl Planning and Resources. Plans for phonics interventions ensure progression and effective, high-quality teaching.

In every discrete phonics lesson:

- In each lesson there will be a focus phoneme/s for the pupil to be working on.
- All lessons start with a clear learning objective which is linked to the phase of letters and sounds that the pupils are working on.
- The learning objective will specify if the phoneme is a 'reading' focus (blending) or a writing focus 'segmenting'.
- New phonemes will be taught using the correct articulation and terminology and all children will use this terminology in their learning. E.g, phonemes, digraphs, trigraphs, split-digraph.
- At the start of each lesson phoneme flashcards are used as a quick warm up to refresh and rehearse previous sounds for each phase.
- Lessons follow the structure outlined below through the teaching of skills and subskills:

    1. REVISIT & REVIEW: Revise previously taught sounds and graphemes using flashcards, frieze and Say the Sounds Posters.
    2. TEACH: Introduce new sound and grapheme using flashcards, frieze and the Interactive Resources.
    3. PRACTISE: Pupils practise new and revised sounds and graphemes with Sounds & Letters Books and Activity Sheets
    4. APPLY: Pupils extend their core skills with words and sentences using Cumulative Texts and Grapheme Tiles
    5. CONSOLIDATE: Pupils use the Interactive Resource activities and the end pages of the Sounds & Letters Books to consolidate code knowledge and their skills

6. PRACTISE READING: Pupils read Phonics fiction and non-fiction books as independently as possible

- Feedback will be given throughout the lesson to individuals to move learning forwards and drive progress. Children will be given extensions to learning opportunities for children to apply phonemes in context.
- Adults will impact learning throughout the whole phonics lesson by using questions and reinforcement of key strategies taught with individuals.
- Adults will model and demonstrate new learning with groups/individual children.
- Outcomes to learning will be demonstrated in a variety of ways depending on the strategy/learning opportunity. E.g., multi-sensory resources will support learning in a practical way but there will also be opportunities to rehearse and explore writing of key phonemes and words.
- Adults will use higher order questions when asking the children to explain strategies used and ways to read and spell a new word.

Assessment

Assessment is regarded as an integral part of teaching and learning and is a continuous process. We strive to make our assessment purposeful, allowing us to match the correct level of work to the needs of the pupils, thus benefiting the pupils and ensuring progress. It is the practitioner's responsibility to keep track of the progress made by all children, regardless of their phonic ability. Each individual child has their own phonics tracker on the Schools Bromcom database, which is updated each lesson. Assessment data can then be collated from this database to inform planning and teaching. Please refer to the Quality of Education Principles and Feedback Principles documents for further information.

Impact

Assessment for Learning

We continually assess our pupils and recording their progress. Information for assessment is gathered in various ways: by talking to children, asking questions, observing their work, setting specific tasks. Teachers use this assessment information to plan further work and set new targets. The attainment and progress of children in phonics is assessed regularly and discretely at the end of each phase using Read Write Inc. and Fresh Start assessments. These are intended as a test of phonic decoding – not as a wider test of reading – to assess whether children have learnt key knowledge and skills.

Feedback

Children are provided with constructive and timely feedback in lessons. Assessment information is also shared through snap shots / IEP targets passed onto the young person's other teachers at Becton school and their host or future educational provisions.

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ORGANISATION OF PHONICS

The Phonics Lead is responsible for: -

- Ensuring continuity and progression from each phase.
- Providing all members of staff with guidelines and non-negotiables to show how aims are achieved and how the variety of all aspects of phonics is to be taught.
- Advising and supporting colleagues in the implementation and assessment of phonics in school.
- Assisting with the requisition and maintenance of resources required for the teaching of phonics, within the confines of the school budget
- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in phonics across the phase of the school.

The phonics teacher is responsible for:
- Ensuring progressing in the acquisition of phonic knowledge and skills with due regard to the National Curriculum for English and the non-negotiables for each phase.
- Developing and updating skills, knowledge and understanding of phonics.
- Identifying needs in phonics and adapting planning to suit all children.
- Keeping appropriate on-going records.
- Planning effectively for phonics, liaising with phonics leader when necessary.
- Informing of progress, achievements and attainment.

REVIEW

Phonics Lead assures quality assurance of the subject: -

- Completes learning walks according to the Becton Quality Assurance Model.
- Completes work scrutiny according to the Becton Quality Assurance Model.
- Completes regular data collection and analysis to ensure interventions are targeted appropriately and progress is made.
- Staff receive training to ensure delivery of the program is highly effective both via the phonics lead and through the use the Oxford Owl resource bank to access specific training, resources and advice.

- The governors review this policy annually. The governors may, however, review the principles earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

Appendix 1

By the end of the Read Write Inc and Fresh Start Programme young people should: -
- read and understand simple sentences.
- use phonic knowledge to decode common words and read them aloud accurately.
- confidently read by sight the Stage 2 and 3 common exception words
- use phonic knowledge to write words in a way which matches how the sounds are said.
- write some irregular common words.
- apply phonic knowledge and skill as the prime approach to reading unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable.
- read many frequently-encountered words automatically.
- read phonically decodable three-syllable words.
- read a range of age-appropriate texts fluently.
- demonstrate understanding of age-appropriate texts.
- read decodable words that end –s, –es, -ing, -ed, -er, -est
- Say the correct sound to grapheme for all the 40+ phonemes up to Stage 5.
- Read accurately most words of two or more syllables.
- Read most words containing common suffixes.
- Read and spell most common exception words.
- Read words accurately and fluently without overt sounding and blending.
- Sound out most unfamiliar words accurately, without hesitation.
- Segment spoken words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes.

Appendix 2

Sound Letter Correspondence & The skills of blending and segmenting

English represents the sounds of the language and uses an alphabet to do this. It is generally accepted that English has 44 sounds (although this number varies slightly, depending on regional accents). The way the 26 letters of the alphabet are used in English (singly or in combination) to represent the 44 sounds is referred to as the alphabetic code. In the alphabetic code in English:

- a single phoneme can be represented (spelt) in different ways, using one, two, three or four letters. For example, the sound /aw/ can be represented as 'or', 'saw', 'haul', 'lore', 'fraught' and 'sought'
- one grapheme (that is, a letter or combination of letters) can represent different sounds. For example, the digraph (two letters) 'ow' sounds different in 'crowd' and in 'low'; the four letters combined in 'ough' are pronounced differently in 'through', 'rough' and 'bough'; the letter 'c' represents a /s/ sound at the beginning of 'circus' and a /k/ sound in the middle, and so on.
- The lack of a one-to-one correspondence between a sound and a letter in English is frequently used as an argument against using phonics in teaching reading (and

spelling). Therefore, it is important to up-skill all the children and provide them with opportunities to practise the reading and spelling of these words. The sounds are not taught in alphabetical order, but in order of usefulness, so that children can start to read and spell simple words as swiftly as possible.

- There are also phonically irregular words, which we refer to as 'common exception words' such as 'the', 'some' or 'once' that are taught throughout the different phrases.
- A very common sequence begins by teaching children how to represent each of the following six sounds by a letter (as below):
- /s/ s   /a/ a   /t/ t   i/ I   p/ p   /n/ n
- If these sounds are learnt securely and the children are also taught the skill of blending sounds together to read whole words, they can then read (and spell, by segmenting) simple vowel consonant (VC) words such as 'it', 'in', 'is' and 'at' and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words such as 'sat', 'pin', 'nip', 'net', 'tip'.
- Blending and segmenting are, 'reversible processes': that is, if you can blend the sounds together to read a word, you should also be able to identify and break down (segment) the individual sounds in a word you hear to spell it. To spell the word, you need to represent each sound you hear by a letter – or more than one letter.
- The skill of blending sounds together needs to be taught directly. Children may be able to say the sound a letter 'makes' when shown the letter (for instance, on a flashcard), but this does not necessarily mean that they can blend individual sounds together to make a whole word. (Letters do not actually 'make' sounds: they are just a way of representing that sound in writing.)
- In segmenting to spell a word, the teacher or the child is listening to a whole word, identifying the individual sounds (not letters) that make up the word choosing a letter or more than one letter to represent each individual sound.