

Hall Orchard Barrow CE Primary School (Academy)

Guidance on phonics and the teaching of reading and writing

Our pupils learn to read and write effectively and quickly using the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme. The Read Write Inc.

Phonic programme

The programme is for:

- pupils in Year R to Year 2 who are learning to read and write
- any pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 who need to catch up rapidly.

We teach pupils to:

- decode letter-sound correspondences quickly and effortlessly, using their phonic knowledge and skills read 'tricky' words on sight
 - understand what they read
 - read aloud with fluency and expression
 - write confidently, with a strong focus on vocabulary and grammar
 - spell quickly and easily by segmenting the sounds in words
- acquire good handwriting.

In addition, we teach pupils to work effectively with a partner to explain and consolidate what they are learning. This provides the teacher with opportunities to assess learning and to pick up on difficulties, such as pupils' poor articulation, or problems with blending or alphabetic code knowledge.

We group pupils homogeneously, according to their progress in reading rather than their writing. This is because it is known that pupils' progress in writing will lag behind progress in reading, especially for those whose motor skills are less well developed. Children's individual writing targets will also be developed in guided writing sessions as well as throughout the curriculum as a whole.

In Year R we emphasise the alphabetic code. The pupils rapidly learn sounds and the letter or groups of letters they need to represent them. Simple mnemonics help them to grasp this quickly. This is especially useful for pupils at risk of making slower progress. This learning is consolidated daily. Pupils have frequent practice in reading high frequency words with irregular spellings – 'tricky words'. In addition, these words are sent home for parental information and support.

We make sure that pupils read books that are closely matched to their increasing knowledge of phonics and the 'tricky words'. This is so that, early on, they experience success and gain confidence that they are readers. Re-reading and discussing these books with the teacher supports their increasingly fluent decoding.

Alongside this, the teachers read a wide range of stories, poetry and non-fiction to pupils; they are soon able to read these texts for themselves.

Embedding the alphabetic code early on means that pupils quickly learn to write simple words and sentences. We encourage them to compose each sentence aloud until they are confident to write independently. We make sure they write every day.

Pupils write at the level of their spelling knowledge, that is, they use their knowledge of the alphabetic code and the tricky words they have learnt. They can soon spell more complex words confidently and

accurately. The quality of the vocabulary they use in their writing reflects the language they have heard in the books the teacher has read to them; they have also discussed what the words mean.

Our aim is for pupils to complete the phonics programme as quickly as possible. The sooner they complete it, the sooner they will be able to choose books to read at their own interest and comprehension level.

Achievement in our school

Assessing and tracking progress

We assess all pupils from Year R to Year 2 on the Read Write Inc. Sound and Word Entry Assessment and we use this data to assign them to the appropriate Read, Write Inc. group. We may also use this assessment for pupils beyond Year 2 where appropriate. This gives us a very good indication of how well they are making progress relative to their starting points. We do this for all pupils, whenever they join us, so we can track all of them effectively, including those eligible for the pupil premium.

For those on the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme, we record their starting date and entry point on the school tracking database to monitor the rate at which they are making progress. We can also easily identify those who joined the programme later. In addition, we use PiXL tests and teacher assessments against the national curriculum levels so that we can ensure that the gains our pupils are making are age-appropriate.

By the end of Key Stage 1, our pupils are able to read aloud age-appropriate texts accurately and with sufficient speed. This means that we can focus on developing their comprehension, preparing them well for transition to Key Stage 2. Their good decoding skills mean that they have a sound strategy for decoding unfamiliar words when they come across them at whatever stage or in any subject, even into secondary school.

Our figures show that around 50% of our pupils complete the phonics programme by the end of Year 1 and around 60%, complete the programme by the end of the autumn term of Year 2. We aim for all children to be accurate and speedy readers by the time they enter Key Stage 2.

Pupils who are making slower progress usually complete the programme by the end of Year 2. We support pupils who have identified special educational needs for however long it takes until they can read. For example, we identify those who are at risk of falling behind their peers immediately – whatever their age. Highly trained staff run intervention groups using the Read Write Inc. and PiXL materials where appropriate.

Narrowing the gap – and the pupil premium

The programme as a whole has been very effective for our pupils in narrowing performance gaps between different groups, both within our school and nationally. We know from our rigorous tracking that our pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have made progress in line with that of our other pupils or are catching up quickly.

Phonic screening check

We have high expectations of our pupils' progress. In the June 2019 phonic screening check, 86% of our pupils reached the threshold. We attribute this to the programme and to the expectations it builds in.

Impact across the curriculum

Our teachers are enthusiastic about using the Read Write Inc. programme because they can see how well pupils learn from it and the progress they make, not just in English but across the curriculum. Read Write Inc. teaching and pupil feedback strategies are used across all subjects.

Quality of teaching in our school

The programme's 'cycle of instruction' means that, after direct instruction and guided practice, the pupils teach another pupil. In this way they all rehearse and consolidate what they have been learning. This helps the pupils to make their understanding clear to themselves and helps the teacher deal with any misconceptions. 'Partner teaching' is a key assessment tool. We also use this approach very effectively in other subjects.

Assessment is a critical element of our programme. The teachers assess:

- pupils' phonic knowledge
- the speed at which pupils are able to read the text
- their understanding of the stories they read.

We record the results from the Sound and Word Assessments, which take place every six to eight weeks, on our tracking database. This data allows us to intervene in different ways. For instance, we quickly move pupils to another group if they are progressing faster than their peers. Those who continue to struggle may have one-to-one tutoring or booster groups so that they keep up.

The homogeneous groupings allow the teachers to focus on all pupils for the whole lesson. This means that all the pupils are engaged, with a positive impact on their behaviour. They learn to participate fully: we agree with them the rules for working in a group or discussing with a partner. We discourage 'hands up' for answering questions because we believe that all pupils should answer every question. The teacher selects pupils to answer.

The Read Write Inc. programme has detailed lesson plans. These give the teachers practical day-to-day guidance, but we work hard to build on these plans so that the lessons are matched carefully to the needs of their particular group. Every activity in every lesson is prepared thoroughly and has a very clear purpose. The teacher explains this at the beginning so that the pupils understand, during the activity, what they are learning and why.

Simple teaching strategies and a lively pace ensure that all the pupils participate fully– there is no chance for them to lose concentration and miss key elements. In addition, because all the pupils are grouped across Key Stage 1 in terms of their reading ability, they are reading at an appropriate decoding level every day. The homogeneous groups help us to focus the teaching and ensure pupils make very good progress.

Additional support for lower-attaining pupils

Pupils in the 'lowest' attaining group have the widest variety of needs. This is therefore the least homogeneous group. In order to give these pupils the same carefully targeted teaching as all the other groups, some of these pupils have daily one-to-one tutoring or booster groups for 10 to 20 minutes, in addition to their group session in the morning. This tutoring helps us to meet their individual needs.

Feedback and marking

We emphasise constructive feedback. For example, we praise pupils for what they do well; such as displaying the behaviour they all need for their learning to be successful. Teaching partners are praised for their effective teaching.

We have clear systems for marking pupils' work. Pupils know their teacher's expectations for each activity. We mark short activities with the pupils in the lesson. Extended pieces are marked afterwards. We discuss the outcomes with the group and individuals so that the marking is genuinely used to take forward pupils' learning.

Homework

Parents are given guidance on how to support their children's reading and writing at home through workshops, parent consultations and our home/school liaison books. Activities are set by class teachers to give the children the opportunity to apply, practice and develop their reading and writing skills.

Quality of teaching and pupils' progress

The headteacher and reading leader monitor pupils' progress together until every child can read. No child is left behind to struggle. We record lesson observations and any subsequent coaching so that we can see if there is a correlation between the quality of the teaching and the progress pupils make.

Behaviour and safety in our school

Pupils have very positive attitudes to the programme. Their good behaviour and the virtual absence of low-level disruption in lessons contribute to the progress they make. We support this behaviour by using silent signals for gaining their attention, for setting up partner routines, and for managing the way pupils move around the classroom. Everyone uses the same signals. The teachers are encouraged to use these strategies in other lessons, too, so that the approach to behaviour is consistent throughout the day.

We believe that the partner work and the homogeneous groupings help the pupils learn to work together. Effective partner work has the benefit of helping pupils to work closely with others – especially those who are not their best friends. Quick bonding activities help new partners to get to know one another. Boys and girls, first and second language learners, assertive and reticent pupils, and pupils of different ages learn to get on together. Potential bullying is explored and discussed so pupils know how this can develop and how to deal with it if it does.

Pupils are taught the manners and behaviour that are necessary to work with adults and other pupils. Adults are expected to demonstrate positive attitudes and good manners, and to act as role models for pupils. Praise for hard work and good behaviour is fundamental to pupils' progress. The values of courtesy, consideration and kindness are at the heart of every lesson, taught through the programme and embedded in other lessons. All the staff use the same positive strategies for behaviour management across the school. Working well together, as part of a team, is at the core of the school's work – for staff and pupils.

Attendance

The programme is intensive and cumulative, so poor attendance severely disrupts the progress of any pupils who are absent, for however short a time. Attendance is monitored closely and senior leaders support families where appropriate. Where attendance has had a detrimental effect on a child's learning, intervention is usually put in place as soon as the child returns to school.

Leadership and management in our school

Shared vision

The school's shared vision is that every pupil learns to read quickly and continues to read – widely and often. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher work with all the staff to ensure that this happens. The role of the reading leader is critical. The reading leader drives the teaching of Read Write Inc. Phonics, ensuring it is taught with fidelity so that all the pupils complete the programme as quickly as possible.

The reading leader's roles include:

- ensuring pupils in the 'lower progress' group are making good progress and organising one-to-one tutoring for the pupils who need extra support.
- keeping the groups homogeneous, i.e. at the same reading level
- providing further training (through demonstration, coaching, monitoring)

ensuring that our teaching of reading is of the highest quality and that all our pupils make progress.

Teachers alert the reading leader to any pupil whose progress is faster or slower than the rest of their group.

The reading team is made up of a team of good teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) who each teach a group of pupils at the same reading level. Our LSAs generally teach smaller groups of four to twelve.

Professional development

A key element of Read Write Inc. is consistent whole-school practice, underpinned by appropriate professional development. The headteacher, all the teachers and teaching assistants are trained to teach reading. All staff have attended two-day training and the trainer has returned to support us on subsequent development days. In addition to this all staff receive regular coaching and mentoring support from the Literacy Leader.

Parents and carers

We invite parents/carers to an initial workshop in the foundation stage and we hold additional workshops regularly to show how they can help their children read at home. We would like them to help their children, but we also recognise that some are not well-placed to do this. If they don't, their children won't suffer; it is our job to teach their children to read.

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