



Sheldwich Primary School

Phonics Policy

How we Teach Reading

The very first stage of learning to read is, for children to be able to discriminate between different sounds. During their first weeks at school there will be lots of activities which encourage the children to listen carefully, enlarge their vocabulary and speak confidently to adults and each other. Children need to be able to 'hear' the different speech sounds or 'phonemes' in words before they are ready to 'read' them.

The next step is to be able to 'blend' the phonemes they hear together e.g. If a teacher says *c – a – t* the child hears the three phonemes and blends them together to say 'cat'. Next comes 'segmenting' or 'soundtalking' as we call it. This is where children can orally, split up a word into separate phonemes e.g. 'pig' becomes 'p – i – g'.

When children are able to discriminate between speech sounds they are introduced to the way sounds are written. During a daily 'Phonics' lesson the children learn that 'phonemes' (the units of sound) are represented by 'graphemes' (a letter or group of letters). Sheldwich Primary School uses a teaching programme called 'Essential Letter and Sounds' which introduces letters in a particular order. They are taught to read a word starting with the first phoneme and systematically blending the phonemes together from left to right. They begin with phonemes represented by a single letter and then move on to graphemes consisting of two or three letters e.g. '**ai**' as in *r-ai-n* and '**igh**' as in *n-igh-t*.

In addition to learning these phonemes and graphemes the children are also taught high frequency words. Many of these words are not phonetically decodable and need to be learnt as 'sight vocabulary'. That means that children can instantly recognise them without having to soundtalk them first. The larger their sight vocabulary, the more fluent their reading becomes, even during the very early stages of reading.

Throughout KS1 the children continue to systematically learn new graphemes and that a single phoneme can be represented in many different ways *e.g. the long vowel sound 'ee' can be written as : feet, seal, key, happy, extreme (and many more)*. In the early stages of reading, great emphasis is placed on the children's 'decoding', linking sounds to writing and blending them to read words. Their ability to decode efficiently and fluently continues to develop but equally important is their understanding or 'comprehension' of what they have read. To be a successful reader children need both dimensions; good word recognition and good language comprehension.

"High-quality phonic teaching, therefore, secures the crucial skills of word recognition that, once mastered, enable children to read fluently and automatically thus freeing them to concentrate on the meaning of the text. In other words, the learning of phonic skills for reading is a time-limited process whereas 'developing the abilities necessary to understanding and appreciating written texts in different content areas and literary genres continues throughout the lifespan." Rose, March 2006

The skills required to develop word recognition and language comprehension are taught specifically through a variety of activities designed to develop each dimension. Children may progress at different rates within these two areas and careful tracking and assessment of the children's progress enables teachers to plan and teach effectively; and implement additional reading support if necessary.

What follows is a brief overview of the language comprehension skills which are taught to develop children's understanding of text.

To decode accurately and with understanding

There are different types of reading. When you read for pleasure you read all the words but some sections may take you a little longer to read to ensure you take in all the ideas. **Close reading** is when you need to explore the details of the text and this may entail rereading difficult sections to fully understand them. If you only need a general idea of the text you **skim read** looking at headings, titles, opening lines etc. And if you are searching for specific information, you may quickly **scan** a piece of text looking for key words.

To understand, describe, select or retrieve information

In the early stages of reading children are encouraged to identify main events or key points from the text and answer literal retrieval questions. These are questions where the answer is clearly stated in the text *e.g. Where does the story take place? What are the names of the main characters?* As they become more skilled readers, children are able to re-tell stories in more detail or learn to skim and scan texts quickly and efficiently to find the information they need. They will also learn to justify their opinions using quotes or information from the text.

To deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas

This requires the children to read between the lines and look for what is implied (suggested) rather than explicit (stated/obvious); to look at words and how they are organised in order to see the writer's different meanings. To deduce, readers need to be detectives, using evidence from the text to work out what is meant. They may have to fill in the gaps and make links between ideas combining personal experience with clues from the text to help interpret and form opinions. Readers comprehend better when they actively think about and apply their knowledge of the book's topic, their own experiences, and the world around them, making connections between the text and what they already know.

To identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts

Early readers can often use the repeated pattern of a story to help them retell *e.g. I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down* or recognise some of the features of a non-fiction text *e.g. the contents page, index and glossary*. More experienced readers are able to

identify the different structural features of text types e.g. opinion texts, newspaper articles, information leaflets, chronological and non-chronological texts. They understand how paragraphs are linked and can identify and discuss changing levels of humour, tension and drama in a text.

Explain and comment on the writers' use of language

Initially this will be the ability to identify words and phrases that, for example, tell you how a character is feeling. And progressing to being able to understand how style and vocabulary are linked to purpose e.g. exaggerated writing in persuasive texts or some types of newspaper reports. Also being able to find examples of various techniques e.g. onomatopoeia, simile, personification, metaphor and explain the effect it has on the reader. They will learn to identify the key language features in the text e.g. adjectives in a persuasive leaflet, emotive language in a charity appeal, imperatives in a recipe.

Identify and comment on the writers' purpose and viewpoints

Children learn how to identify what the writer is trying to achieve, his/her viewpoint and the effect the writing has on the reader. Highly skilled readers are able to identify how that effect has been created and evidence their opinions from the text.

Relate texts to their cultural and historical contexts and literary traditions

Younger readers begin to show an awareness of texts that are set in different times or places using clues from the text. As they become more skilled they can talk about the way texts written in the past differ from modern writing and characters and settings in different societies.

Our school Reading Policy gives more information as to how we support the children to develop the skills of decoding and reading comprehension and contains the following rationale:

"The ability to read is a precious gift. Reading allows us to explore the unknown and is a doorway to new experiences, new adventures, new feelings and thoughts. Acquiring the ability to read is also a positive foundation for success in later life. At Sheldwich Primary School we believe it is a child's right to read and it is our aim to get every child reading. As the Rose Review stated, "learning to read progresses to reading, effortlessly, to learn." We hope to instil in the children in our care a great passion for reading and, through this, a great passion for lifelong learning.

Reading development is closely related to that of writing, speaking and listening. It is by immersion in text, reflecting and talking about it and by experiencing the writing process for themselves that children come to understand the special relationship which exists between author and reader. It is through their critical and imaginative engagement with texts that pupils' reading of fiction, poetry and non-fiction texts enables them to make sense of the world and their place in it."

The time honoured words of Dr Seuss:

“The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.”

The document above explains how we develop the children's reading skills. We use a range of reading schemes including Oxford Reading Tree, Code X and Big Cat Phonics. If you require any support with your child's reading please see MRs Lay or Mrs Morrison.

Reviewed by SM: September 2023

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