

Phonics at Abbey Court School

The National Curriculum (2014) states that “*Phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school*”.

Additionally the Rose Report (DfES 2006) directed teachers to teach literacy through synthetic phonics. However, it is suggested that this is “*unlikely to be suitable for many children with SLD and may obscure the importance of teaching in alternative media*” (Lacey et al, 2007). The Rose Report also recognises that synthetic phonics teaching in its conventional form will not be suitable for 8% of pupils.

As a result, at Abbey Court we teach phonics as appropriate to individual needs of pupils. Phonological awareness is taught through the *Letters and Sounds- Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics*, a systematic, high quality programme that guides pupils through six phases of phonological development, at a rate which is appropriate to individual need.

The programme is divided into the following phases:

Phase	Phonic Knowledge and Skills
<i>Phase One</i>	Activities are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting. Each aspect is divided into three strands: auditory discrimination, auditory memory and sequencing and developing language and language comprehension.
<i>Phase Two</i>	Learning 19 letters of the alphabet and one sound for each. Blending sounds together to make words. Segmenting words into their separate sounds. Beginning to read simple captions.
<i>Phase Three</i>	The remaining 7 letters of the alphabet, one sound for each. Graphemes such as ch, oo, th representing the remaining phonemes not covered by single letters. Reading captions, sentences and questions. On completion of this phase, children will have learnt the "simple code", i.e. one grapheme for each phoneme in the English language.
<i>Phase Four</i>	No new grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught in this phase. Children learn to blend and segment longer words with adjacent consonants, e.g. swim, clap, jump.
<i>Phase Five</i>	Now we move on to the "complex code". Children learn more graphemes for the phonemes which they already know, plus different ways of pronouncing the graphemes they already know.
<i>Phase Six</i>	Working on spelling, including prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters etc.

The boundaries between each phase and strand are flexible and not fixed: practitioners should plan to integrate the activities according to the developing abilities and interests of the students. The overarching aim is to ensure that pupils experience regular,

planned opportunities to listen carefully and to talk about what they hear, see and can do.

There are agreed schemes, which can be used to compliment the Letters and Sounds programme, to provide progression and alternatives which may be better suited to the learning needs of an individual pupil. These are; Jolly Phonics at Key Stage One and Two and Read, Write, Inc. at Key Stage Three and Four.

In addition the following strategies are used to support early phonological awareness:

- Communication sessions with PMLD pupils may incorporate intensive interaction sessions, usually beginning with the pupil initiating communication (either through verbalisation or movement) which an adult mimics to encourage understanding of two way conversations. These sessions contribute to the development of early literacy skills.
- We encourage working from left to right in everything that we do. Thus early phonological awareness skills are developed through tracking activities with pupils who are functioning at early P levels – note the use of ICT programs here and the Sensory room.
- Pupils are encouraged to ‘play’ with sounds –encouraging vocalisations.
- Photographs/pictures of activities and events are a useful tool. Pictures can totally capture the attention of very young children and our pupils and teach the skill of extracting meaning from illustrations to help them make sense of the text. This continues to be used by our pupils as we read stories to them and is an important skill for those who are not going to read or write conventionally.
- Objects of reference are used extensively and objects of reference stations are placed around the school to support pupils awareness of their school environment. Objects of reference are the first stepping stone to learning about symbols.
- Many pupils will read symbols. Symbols are important in supporting communication and reading skills. They are also used for timetables, sequencing skills such as dressing, etc. in the SLD context
- We use strategies to access literature through means other than reading for example; call and response (Keith Parks), drama, television, film and storytelling are all valuable alternatives to conventional literacy. This is also important in making the canon of literature accessible to our pupils.
- Our more able pupils are able to access phonics teaching in a more conventional way. However, using picture cues is not encouraged although this can be a useful way in our context of ensuring that pupils have success.
- Hearing loss has a serious impact on speech perception. We use additional strategies that can support communication such signs, gestures, facial expressions.
- As a school we recognise that the teaching of phonics needs to be consistent and sustained throughout. We use a number of reading schemes to enable us to capitalize on pupils’ interests and motivations these include Read Write Inc

resources, Oxford Reading Tree books, Magic Key books and other quality phonics reading schemes.

- Our pupils develop a range of sight vocabulary which will be increasingly linked to life skills such as social sight signs. The recognition of this sight vocabulary is essential to our pupils as they prepare for life beyond Abbey Court.
- Our Literacy Core Groups recognise the need for differentiated, targeted phonic input.

Phonics is taught discretely and there are also opportunities to reinforce and apply acquired phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

Progress in developing and applying phonic knowledge is carefully assessed and monitored. With records on progress kept in individual pupil progress files.

Where appropriate, teachers will develop the classroom environment to have an age appropriate display concentrating on both sounds and key words.

Updated by Zoe Silvester – February 2019