



Blackburn with Darwen L.A.

St. Thomas's Centre

Phonics and Reading Policy

Review Date: September 2025

Phonics

In light of 'The 2021 to 2022 Phonics Validation Process' (Department for Education, 'Choosing a Phonics Teaching Programme', 04/10/2024) at St. Thomas's we have chosen to use the systematic and synthetic programme (SSP) 'Read Write Inc Phonics'.

The reasons we have decided to use this particular programme are:

- The structured and repetitive nature of the programme meets the learning needs of many of our pupils who have additional and sometimes complex learning needs.

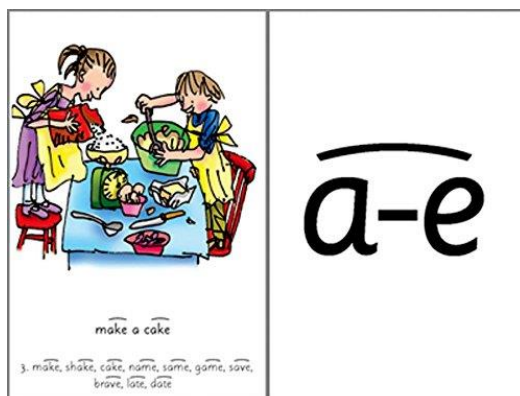
As soon as Primary pupils start with us at St. Thomas's Centre, they will be assessed in line with, and begin to use (where needed) the Read Write Inc Phonics programme. Pupils who still require daily phonics will have 20 to 30 minutes daily phonics. Pupils with significant gaps in phonics, will receive additional phonics intervention.

What is Read Write Inc Phonics?

At St. Thomas's we believe Read Write Inc Phonics is one of the best systematic and synthetic programmes to support our pupils in learning to read. Pupils will be assessed and grouped according to their phonics ability, working in small groups with a teacher or teaching assistant. Read Write Inc Phonics uses '*pure sounds*' which removes the '*uh*' sounds from words.

Speed Sounds

When teaching phonics, we will use the term '*speed sounds*', these are individual sounds which pupils will learn to read quickly and effortlessly as they progress through the Read, Write Inc Phonics. Pupils will be regularly assessed to ensure they are reaching their full potential and will receive additional booster sessions if appropriate.



Phoneme

Pupils will aim to learn a new sound every day (or at a speed suitable to them) accompanied by a handwriting rhyme which helps them to remember how to form the letter shape when writing it. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech, this may be one letter, or a group of two or three letters which make one sound. For example, if a pupil is learning the phoneme (sound) 'a', they would also learn the rhyme 'round the apple and down the leaf' when they start to write the letter. In set 1, pupils will learn 44 phonemes.

Blending

As pupils learn each sound (phoneme), they are taught how to blend the sounds together to make two and three letters words, e.g. dog and cat. Pupils will learn how to read real and nonsense words.

Green Words

Alongside this, pupils will start to read 'green' words. 'Green' words are words which can be sounded out and blended like 'dog' and 'cat'.

Red Words

Once pupils have gained confidence sounding out green words, they will be taught about 'red' words. These words are 'Red (tricky) Words', *i.e. words which cannot be sounded out phonetically like 'l', 'to' and 'go'*. Pupils will start to learn 'Red (tricky) Words' such as; 'l', 'the' and 'my'. They will also learn why these words are 'tricky' and cannot be sounded out.

Grouping and Assessment (after Speed Sounds)

Once pupils are confident in Set 1, 2 and 3 sounds, 'Green Words' and 'Red (tricky) Words', they will be assessed again in order to place them in the correct reading (Ditty) group. According to the outcomes of assessment, pupils will be placed in a coloured Ditty group to match their ability and their next steps in reading. Groups are ordered from Red to Grey.

Reading

At St. Thomas's Centre, we have a whole school ethos and culture which promotes a love of reading with the message to all of our pupils being that 'reading is knowledge' and the skill of reading will assist in all aspects of learning and is a crucial life skill.

Staff at St. Thomas's are positive role models in showing pupils a passion for reading and how reading is key to accessing all areas of the curriculum and how vital it is in opening up opportunities within and beyond school.

We recognise the complexity of words that pupils encounter across the curriculum and actively broaden pupil's vocabulary through explicit teaching of more complex words. Pupils are given opportunities to practice using these words alongside high frequency words in a variety of contexts. Reading displays are regularly updated with pupil input.

Pupil progress in reading is assessed each term using the GL Assessment New Group Reading Test. These tests produce valuable data which informs ongoing teaching and learning. This data includes both reading age and age-standardised scores, which allow pupil attainment to be benchmarked nationally, as well as enabling meaningful comparisons between pupils and groups of pupils.

The tests highlight when pupils are not making the expected amount of progress in their reading, and provides detailed information around sentence completion and passage comprehension. This allows us to put in place appropriate and personalised interventions in order to fill any gaps and ensure pupils are supported to reach their potential in reading.

Primary

The teaching of reading focuses on developing competence in both word reading and comprehension. During reading lessons, teachers model fluent reading, using high quality texts to engage their pupils. They teach the skills needed to support comprehension: prediction, questioning, clarifying, summarising, thinking aloud, identifying the text structure and visualising. Encouraging pupils to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction, allows them to establish an appreciation and love of reading, as well as gaining knowledge across the curriculum. Reading widely and often, increases pupil vocabulary, as they encounter new words that they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds their imagination, inspiring them as writers.

We actively encourage all pupils to read across all curriculum subjects and for pleasure throughout every school day. Pupils in every class listen to their teacher read (and sometimes follow along using their own copy of the book) every day and are encouraged to discuss the content of what they have been reading with their teacher throughout the day. Pupils visit the school library often and have their own reading areas in every classroom.

In addition to reading a wide range of texts in English lessons, pupils read daily to or with an adult. In these reading sessions, pupils read books from either 'Read, Write, Inc' or 'Project X' schemes. The books used in these sessions are carefully matched to pupil levels where the text they read is

challenging, motivating and allows teaching staff the opportunity to assess pupil comprehension of texts. Daily reading is recorded in individual 'Reading Records' where comments are made relating to engagement, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Staff will also comment on next steps in reading as part of the recording process.

Pupil reading levels are also assessed on a half termly basis in line with LAPS (Learning and Progression Steps). Teaching staff assess the number of steps a pupil has made and use this information to set new reading targets for the following half term. Pupils are involved in setting next steps and are aware of their reading targets. Reading steps are collated and presented on a Progress Report which is shared with parents/carers and dual schools where a pupil is on dual roll.

In Primary, reading is celebrated in a multitude of ways including 'World Book Day', weekly achievement assemblies (Star of the Week), Headteacher's Award, 'Wow Work' displays, 'Work of the Week', 'Word of the Week', achievement postcards and positive phone calls home.

Secondary

The KS3 English curriculum has been curated to build on the primary curriculum with specific lessons on phonics and literacy. At both KS3 and KS4 rich texts are carefully chosen to increase background knowledge. This includes poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts, which broaden pupils understanding of the wider world. Word etymology is discussed to develop pupil's curiosity, and enable them to make connections.

Reading is also a focus across the curriculum where consistent strategies are employed for pre, during and post teaching to support the development of pupil's vocabulary schema. There is a focus on the explicit teaching of subject specific vocabulary which is then reinforced for example through the use of knowledge organisers and classroom displays. High frequency words are imbedded across the curriculum. Oracy techniques are also practised through opportunities to read aloud.

Interventions

Pupils who are below chronological age in their reading scores have access to bespoke reading interventions. Interventions focus on areas such as phonics, decoding, comprehension, fluency and inference according to individual need.

In primary a higher-level teaching assistant has dedicated intervention time each week to support pupils with additional phonics sessions. These follow the Read Write Inc scheme used by classroom teachers.

In secondary the pupil support officers have dedicated intervention time to support below age expected readers. Pupils are supported using 'Yes We Can Read', a phonics-based reading scheme.