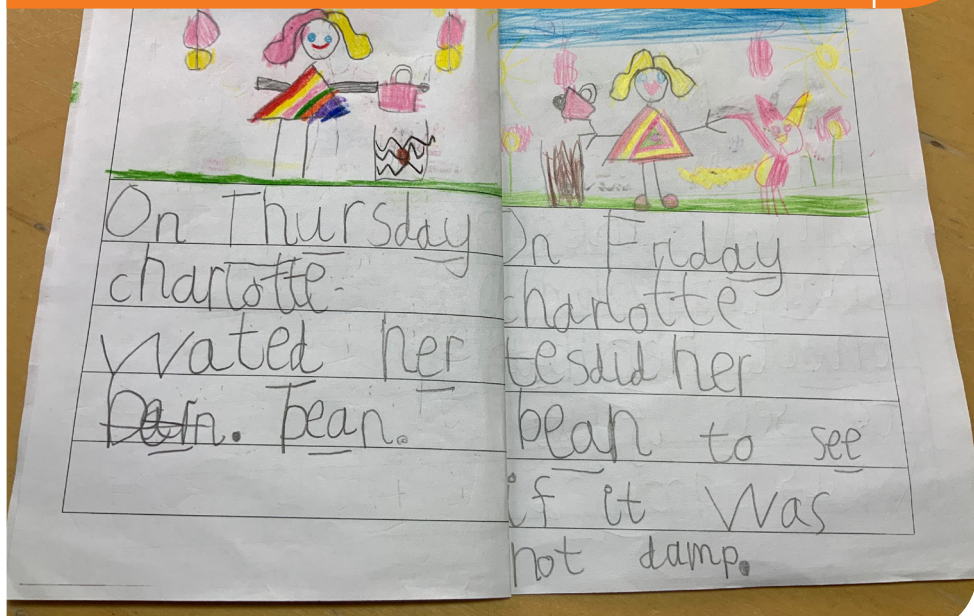


# Phonics, early reading, and writing

TEACHING AND LEARNING  
AND ASSESSMENT



SHARING LEARNING ACROSS THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP  
PEER PARTNERSHIP VALIDATED SCHOOL STRENGTH

*“With new approaches, you have got to get everyone on board with it. When we changed our phonics scheme, we all trained in the new programme, including our Key Stage 2 teachers.”* **MICHAEL SCHUMM, HEADTEACHER**

## Intention

Two years ago, the school changed its phonic scheme to Read, Write, Inc. (RWI). Although the phonic programme was already well taught in the school, and phonic screening results were already above the national, the teachers wanted a scheme that would further improve the results of particular ability groups, such as the more able.

The new Early Years Foundation Stage Co-ordinator (FSCO), who introduced RWI to the school with support from the Key Stage 1 leader, says, “We have some very able children in school, and we wanted to increase the percentages of children getting the complete score in the test. We also wanted to create more confidence and fluency in phonics for our middle and lower ability children. This scheme has enabled us to achieve this target.”

The Key Stage 1 leader adds, “We wanted a set of reading books that would link very clearly back to our discrete phonics session. When children know that they can decode the reading books, they stumble less. My pupils like the partner work in reading. That builds confidence too.”

The school has developed RWI as



an essential part of its early literacy programme in the Early Years Foundation Stage and KS1.

There is a clarity and understanding about the role of phonics in early literacy. Literacy is seen within a much larger context. It includes phonics, but also speaking and listening, creative writing and the development of reading for pleasure.

“We have developed our phonics programme now,” says the FSCO, “so that it is bespoke, and matches just what our children need in order to be successful learners.”

Although it is systematically, rigorously and consistently taught, attention has also been given, by teachers, to how children can apply this knowledge in rich reading and writing activities.

Creative writing, and reading for pleasure are also encouraged.

*“When we introduced the new phonic programme, we carefully managed the whole process. We spent lots of time ‘dropping-in’ to sessions and then matching our bespoke training to what we saw needed improving.”* **R FRANCIS, FSCO**

## Implementation

Introducing and developing a new phonics programme in school requires a lot of considerations in order for it to be successful. For example, it needs to address a particular need, it needs to increase achievements for pupils in a tangible way, and it needs to be manageable.

It needs the support of the senior leadership team in order to work. The headteacher is very clear about how new strategies such as this can be successfully implemented.

*“When the FSCO came to me with the suggestion to change the phonics programme, and the reasons why a new programme would work better, I told her we would try it. I also asked the KS1 leader to support the FSCO in this new initiative.”*

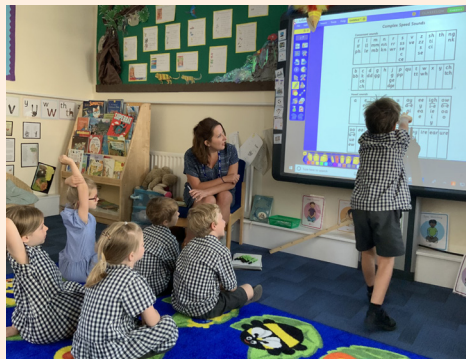
The two middle leaders, the KS1 leader, who is also a Year 1 teacher, and the FSCO, who teaches in one of the Reception classes, speak of the support they have had from senior leaders in implementing the scheme. They acknowledge that this has contributed to its success, along with the bespoke training package they developed for the wider staff team who would be delivering a daily phonics session.

They knew that the new programme would bring lots of challenges particularly to teaching assistants who had never directly taught groups of pupils before.

They adopted a non-threatening approach to the training, and introduced the programme in waves, rather than ‘throwing everything away at once and starting completely afresh.’

Their informal training system has worked. They developed a series of ‘modelled’ support sessions to improve practice for everyone. They modelled what they wanted adults to do, based on the difficulties they saw when they monitored practice through the informal ‘drop-in’ visits to each phonic group.

Phonics timetabling, for all the groups, is now given priority in the school planning at the start of the academic year.



*"We run parent workshops at the start of the year. We tell parents that at school we teach their children new knowledge, and at home they can consolidate it. We say, 'get your child to teach you phonics!'"* S FOSTER, KS 1 CO-ORDINATOR

## Impact

The headteacher says, "I am very pleased the new phonics programme has been successful. We are in our second year now, and you can really see a big difference. I can see it in the quality of writing children are producing, especially the more able learners."

More adults are now responsible for the direct, discrete, teaching of phonics. The small group phonics activity, particularly in Year 1, has increased some children's confidence in reading and writing.

In Reception, the class teacher aims to keep as many children as possible in one whole class multi-sensory discrete teaching session. Small group reading and writing activities then follow on from this activity.

In Year 1, pupils are taught in small groups. This means that pupils get individual attention that is matched to their needs. Each child gets a chance to speak and have individual



feedback on her/his answer.

In addition, half-termly phonic assessments give all the adults the opportunity to assess the success of their teaching. It also gives the phonics leaders the material to analyse the overall success of the programme and put in further training where this might be needed.

There are high expectations across the year groups. In the summer term, Reception are happily decoding tricky words such as 'please'. In Year 1 a group of children are fluently and confidently decoding Phase 5 regular and tricky words.

This phonic success enables the teachers to focus on developing a rich and creative literacy curriculum.

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