Raleigh
EDUCATION TRUST

Education

Literacy: Phonics approach

Empowering through education

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Phonics

The Trust believes in the importance of utilising assets across the group of schools. At Ambleside Academy they have developed a highly effective policy for the teaching of phonics which follows a systematic synthetic approach. The school explicitly teaches the correspondences between letters and sounds to segment for spelling and blend for reading.

Whilst this approach follows the phases set out in the 'Letters and Sounds Document' the bespoke approach is driven by high quality half termly assessment which informs next steps of learning to ensure that their children demonstrate good progress in the number of sounds that they know and words that they can read.

Leaders have a clear structure to the teaching sequence of a phonics lessons at their academy which impacts positively on the progress that children make. The repetition of sessions throughout a day allows children to be successful decoders.

The Structure of a session

Revisit

This is the most important part of the session to make sure that the children are making links to previous learning. This is consolidation of previous sounds learnt and ensure that the children can build the capacity to retain and recall sounds that they have been previously taught. They can use fastest finger sheets. They must also read lots of words including the sounds to ensure that the children are applying reading of words.

Teach

This is the part of the session whereby a new sound is taught. Teachers should skywrite the grapheme in lots of different ways to make sure that the children remember what the sound looks like.

Practise

The children help you read/write lots of words together, segmenting, blending, using robot actions are extremely important to aid pupils in remembering.

Apply

Reading and writing at word and sentence level related to the new sounds. Key teaching points that are paramount for children include: Use of robot talk and actions, use of sound buttons, incorporating diagraphs, trigraphs and tricky blends including d and b, ff and th and g and y. These are common difficulties within phonics as are exposing children to polysyllabic and compound words that all children experience.

The school has devised its own Ambleside Phonics Family. Each puppet has a special name which relates to the family of which they are experts of. The aim of this is to help the children remember the sounds related and brings a purpose for learning. Within our approach we also use repetition, rhymes, actions and pictures to aid memory for different sounds/spelling patterns this has proven highly effective for us at Ambleside.

Phonics support package

The trust phonics package of support is intended to rapidly increase the quality of teaching and learning and increase the number of sounds that the children know.

> *At Ambleside Academy the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in this aspect is judged to be good. Last year our phonics score increased for 66% of children passing the phonics screening to 83% above national.*
>
> *We have a rigorous and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics where accurate assessment is the heart of our approach.*

The approach

The school has created a mock up assessment pack of phonics screening tests. One per term.

Initially all children are screened on a baseline test. This informs us of how many words the children can read through accurate segmenting and blending and which words and sounds they need to learn next.

From this initial score the children are banded into their phonics groups across all of the adults available to the class to teach phonics. At our academy we have six adults and six groups.

From this staff complete planning based on the sounds that the children do not know, linking to the phases of phonics to ensure breadth of coverage, linking groups of sounds together. Therefore if the children do not know the oi sound from the screening then staff in their teaching will cover both spelling patterns for that sound, “oi” and “oy”.

These children receive two phonics sessions daily in focused targeted groups for 20 minutes.

Each class will also receive targets intervention within an afternoon whereby they learn specific sounds that they were not able to read within the baseline assessment.

The children will then be given a different mock test from then on at the end of each term and the leadership team will track the progress that is being made through the improvement of scores each time. Each time they take the test it will be on a different set of words. This provides new sounds each time that the children do not know.

The structure of a phonics session

Part of the reason why this approach to teaching phonics is successful is due to the clear teaching sequence that is repeated for these children several times a day. See above for structure details.

Collectively, we strongly believe that learning should be purposeful and in context. We link phonics to our topic work, for example helping the alien to collect his spaceships into the space bin or the golden sun.

We will often use hands on and practical methods to ensure that children can form their letters properly for example in the alien gloop (paint in a plastic wallet) or working for the aliens on their space paper (silver shiny foil)

We believe that phonics should be active and that children should have the chance to get up and learn through doing. Phonics trails whereby children can collect sounds and work for the aliens on their secret mission provides them with a reason to read.

How the approach can support each school to improve

- We have an assessment system that is completely transferable to another school.
- Our Assistant Principal of Year 1 will come and baseline some of the children using 2019 phonics screening paper and create a clear indication of the sounds that the children do not know, their current score and what sounds the children need to know next to make next steps of progress.
- A lead teacher at the academy requiring improvement will be supported to use this data to group the children, with clear direction of the sounds that each group of children need to learn next in order to maximise pupil progress.
- Staff from Ambleside academy will offer guidance with effective planning of phonics through support in PPA/ planning format to be shared that is clear, concise and effective.
- The lead teacher from Ambleside academy will follow the collaborative planning in each school, demonstrate how that should be resourced and teach a model lesson for staff to see what a good phonics session should look like.
- This could then be replicated by the teacher observing, team teaching and peer observations in a coaching style to improve the quality of teaching and learning through an effective strategy proven to sustain improvement in another academy.
- Teaching assistants from the academies will have the opportunity to shadow and team up to improve the quality of phonics intervention sessions.
- The cycle of assessment will then be repeated with the assistant principal re screening the children on the next mock test at the end of the half term to see if the children have increased in the number of sounds that they know and can read in words.
- Thereafter the data would inform next groupings for the children for morning and afternoon phonics and intervention.
- Support with planning will be given to ensure that the next 6 weeks of planning is pitched appropriately for individual group needs and that the coverage is as expected linking to the sounds that the children do not know.

Further support available includes:

- Pure sounds training
- How to make phonics fun and in context
- Making a learning environment that is rich in print
- Phonics in English sessions and independent application
- Workshops for parents to help understand methodology and expectation (Workshop 1. at Ambleside Academy 13.02.2