



Teaching word recognition & decoding skills

Doubletrees School.

Context of school

Doubletree's school is a 2-19 provision. We have three learning pathways within school. The pre-formal learning pathway, Engagement Pathway, where learners follow the Engagement Model. The Exploration cohort is a semi-formal learning pathway, where learners access the pre-requisites to learning and the early stages of the National Curriculum. The third pathway is our Discovery pathway, where learners access the National curriculum through formal learning opportunities. We have an EYFS and Post 16 provision.

Our learners are complex and diverse, and we take a personalised learning approach to our curriculum, making adaptations to ensure that learning is accessible to all.

Intent

We aim to support our learners to become as independent readers and writers as they are able. To achieve this, we aim to equip our young people with a range of decoding and sight word recognition skills, supporting them with the written word. This will begin with a focus on sound discrimination, understanding pattern and oral motor skills, whilst developing their skills to attend and learn. As our young people progress through the school, we aim to prepare our young people to access the written world in the wider world to foster their independence skills. This may include the introduction of social sight and functional vocabulary recognition where appropriate.

Implementation

The Education Endowment Foundation states *'Phonics has a positive impact overall (+5 months) with very extensive evidence and is an important component in the development of early reading skills, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The teaching of phonics should be explicit and systematic to support children in making connections between the sound patterns they hear in words and the way that these words are written. The teaching of phonics should be matched to children's current level of skill in terms of their phonemic awareness and their knowledge of letter sounds and patterns (graphemes).'*

Phase 1 phonics is the first step in a child's journey in learning to read and concentrates on developing speaking and listening skills. Children will learn to listen to sounds in the environment around them and to discriminate between them.

Children need many opportunities to listen carefully to sounds to fully develop their listening skills when identifying and matching letter sounds.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination), Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

Learners work through the aspects based on the assessments carried out.

Lesson structure in a Phase 1 lesson will look slightly different and will follow the sequence of what's in the box linked to the aspect being followed. A whole class interactive activity where learners listen to and recognise sounds, followed by an individual activity linked to the aspect.

Learners assessed at Phase 1 will focus on one sound a week which will be incorporated into writing and continuous provision.

From phase 2 onwards we primarily we use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds structured synthetic phonics programme up to key stage 3. This is a government accredited phonics programme, and it is used as a whole school approach to ensure consistency and the progression and development of skills.

This is delivered daily in discrete sessions where the learners are grouped across the different key stages according to the phase that they are working on, ensuring that the teaching is matched to the learner's current skill level. Where appropriate, for learners with sensory impairment, who use AAC or require other adaptations to their curriculum, we supplement this with whole sight word recognition strategies.

We ensure our phonics teaching is successful by ensuring that it is taught through direct teaching in frequent, short bursts. This ensures there is consistency of approach, there is a secure, systematic progression in phonics learning and we provide repeated practice, opportunity for the application of phonics using matched decodable books and early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective keep-up support.

Learners are assessed half termly to ensure that any barriers to progress are identified and learners are assigned to the groups that match their most up to date phonic phase and skill level.

The discrete teaching of phonics is supplemented by the reading scheme. We use the Oxford Reading tree scheme, which links to the Letters and Sounds programme. Books are chosen which match the phonics phase that each individual is on. There are opportunities for reading both in school and at home, where applicable. This is not only to reinforce the phonic sounds that are learnt in the phonics sessions, but also to provide opportunities to develop the learners' understanding of the text. Further reinforcement is provided by the teaching of writing. The teaching of graphemes that match the learnt phonemes is a further reinforcement tool. For this we use the Oxford Owl Nelson handwriting scheme, which is also links to the Oxford Reading Tree scheme and Letters and Sounds, so there is consistency structure and progression.

By the end of key stage three, if our learners have not progressed beyond phase 2 of the Letters and Sounds programme then the focus becomes the development of social and functional sight vocabulary. If a more personalised approach is recognised earlier as being more effective as a strategy, due to the individual needs of a learner, then this is introduced and delivered alongside the structured phonics teaching. This may include use of the POPs scheme for whole word recognition, the production of personalised resources and reading books with motivating subject matter included and the use of AAC/visual to support learners who are non-verbal or have sensory impairments. We work closely with our SaLT team to support this.

When our learners enter our post 14 phase, if they are continuing to progress through the phases of Little Wandle then they continue to receive this input to allow progression in decoding and word recognition, but with an increased focus on application to real life contexts.

This approach is part of our commitment to providing a Literacy rich environment, including opportunities for shared reading, self-directed 'Love of reading' opportunities and participation in national initiatives, such as World Book Day and National Poetry Day.

Impact - Assessment of outcomes (So what difference did it make – Include evidence)

Letters and Sounds assessments are carried out half termly, to inform grouping and phases for the next half term. This allows us to track their progress in phonics learning. This is supplemented by their progress through the reading scheme, linked to their phonics. Reading is assessed twice yearly to track reading ages, which also demonstrated the application of word recognition and decoding skills. This builds skills in a systematic way and allows early identification of barriers to learning and check understanding and knowledge retention regularly. There are opportunities for our learners to apply the skills learnt through a variety of contexts to ensure that these are truly embedded.

Last year all learners in key stages 1 and 2 attended this phased, structured phonics approach and all learners achieved expected and exceeding progress. This is well above Trust Benchmarks.

This approach was rolled out to key stage 3 in the summer term and is continuing to be embedded.

In the Autumn term 2022, 69% of all learners accessing daily phonics moved up a phase. This equates to 40 % of our Bridging to and 82% of our Ready to Learn learners.
