



The Children's Hospital School

Phonics Policy

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Children’s Hospital School Phonics Policy

At The Children’s Hospital School, we recognise that Reading is a key skill which is vital to a child’s educational development and that this starts with the development of phonics from a very young age. We aim to take our students on a journey from learning to read to reading to learn, enabling them to become fluent readers with a passion for reading, and to allow them to access wider reading throughout life and appreciate the enjoyment and knowledge that it brings.

Intent

The Children’s Hospital School has pupils from a wide range of schools and recognises that different schools use a variety of phonics schemes, and the experiences of pupils will vary. Therefore, our approach to the teaching of phonics is based on establishing prior knowledge, through communication with the pupil’s home school and initial assessment, identifying the next steps in their learning, and teaching a series of well-planned lessons to address the agreed next steps. Information is gathered regarding which phonics scheme is being used and the student’s stage within it. Consideration is also given to the phonological skills of the pupil, in particular their ability to blend sounds together (orally and in word reading) and segment. A decision is then made, in conjunction with the home school where possible, as to the key focus for the pupil and next steps in learning.

Where information is not available from a home school, teachers will use professional judgement to decide on the next steps. Unless otherwise stipulated by a pupil’s home school, the Twinkl Phonics Scheme is followed.

The selected scheme offers a coherently planned sequence of lessons that support the effective teaching of phonics within EYFS, KS1 and, where appropriate, KS2.

Level 1	Learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to discriminate between and use auditory, environmental, and instrumental sounds. Taught in the EYFS and runs throughout the teaching of phonics Levels 2-6.
Levels 2-4	Learners are introduced to phonemes/sounds and graphemes/letters systematically. They develop and apply blending and segmenting skills for reading and writing.
Level 5	Learners have opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge and skills as the prime approach to reading and spelling. Learners focus on phonetically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words and the alternative ways of pronouncing and representing the long vowel phonemes. Learners develop their ability to attempt to read and spell increasingly complex words.
Level 6	Learners explore spelling patterns and grammar while also developing a breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding in the recognition and spelling of common exception words. Learners develop confidence, resilience and engagement in phonics lessons and a love for reading and writing.

Implementation

Phonics teaching takes place on a 1:1 basis which enables the teaching to be tightly focussed on next steps in learning. All lessons, including phonics, are personalised to the needs and interests of individual pupils and recognise the impact that their medical needs, mental well-being, and cognitive function may have on their learning.

Dynamic and engaging materials ensure a clearly defined structure to the teaching of phonics. Teacher-led lessons enable all learners to develop and apply new skills while also providing opportunities to further apply these skills. Learning activities include a multi-sensory approach as appropriate, which may include actions, magnetic letters, jelly letters, songs, and outdoor learning. At times, PowerPoints, stories, games, additional texts, and toolkits are used to allow children to apply and practise phonics skills. They also offer opportunities to challenge learners and provide support to parents.

The teaching element may include teaching new grapheme-phoneme correspondence using pure sounds, letter formation in printing style, 'tricky' words, blending and segmenting. Sound buttons are used to support reading whereby sounds are represented using a dot for a phoneme, dash for digraph/ trigraph, and a descending loop for split vowel digraph. Tricky words are taught in conjunction with each level.

Handwriting

When teaching upper and lowercase letter formation pupils are taught to print, using clear start and end points, and learning about relative size and placement of letters, with regard to ascenders and descenders. Children may be taught to join the letters in digraphs if this is something specified by their home school. All resources used with the children are in print, including digital and handwritten resources.

Texts

Pupils apply their phonics learning to reading books and texts which are well matched to their knowledge. The texts and books children are asked to read independently are composed almost entirely of words made up of sounds that a child has learned up to that point, in addition to a few known common exception words. The Children's Hospital School has a range of decodable reading materials, including access to online and printed versions of the Rhino Readers which are linked to the phonics scheme. We also have access to a range of other decodable texts, should they be required by the home school.

When writing, pupils are encouraged to use their known sounds to spell phonetically and use key vocabulary mats of tricky words or keywords linked to their writing stimulus (such as character's names).

Phonics is also weaved into the continuous provision time for EYFS, whereby the resources, words, activities that are displayed and available link to the phonic knowledge of the pupil.

Impact

Through the teaching of systematic phonics, our aim is for children to become fluent readers by the end of Key Stage One. This way, children can focus on developing their fluency and comprehension as they move through the school. When pupils leave the Children's Hospital School, their phonic knowledge is reviewed and recorded and forms part of the written report to home school and parents detailing the pupil's progress. Attainment in reading is measured against the National Curriculum requirements for KS1. We do not administer statutory tests; they are delivered by the home school. However, we firmly believe that reading is the key to all learning and so the impact of our reading curriculum goes beyond the results of the statutory assessments

Continuing Professional Development

The Children's Hospital School ensure that all staff leading or delivering phonics have relevant and timely professional development. Training for all staff takes place, to ensure consistency in provision between areas of the hospital site and outreach teaching. The processes of initial information gathering, phonics planning, teaching methods, and ongoing assessment are clear, as well as the common language which is used to teach phonics. The EYFS specialist is available to guide staff with further phonics training if needed to ensure that all children are fully supported to progress. Training takes the form of meetings, presentations, and guidance videos available to staff.