



The Willows School

Phonics & Reading Policy

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An academy within:



“Learning together, to be the best we can be”

1. The national context for Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP)

Reading is fundamental to education. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils' success. Through these, they develop communication skills for education and for leading a safe, successful and independent life away from The Willows. Pupils who find it difficult to learn to read are likely to struggle across the curriculum, since English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching. This is why the government is committed to continuing to raise standards of literacy for all.

From the Rose Review in 2006 which recommended that all schools use systematic phonics to teach reading. The evidence for phonics is indisputable, with the EEF considering it the most secure area of pedagogy. All schools are now required to use an approved systematic phonics programme to teach reading. The Reading Framework published by the government led us to analyse the suitability of various systematic synthetic phonic programmes for The Willows. After careful analysis as a school, we chose to follow the Rocket Phonics SSP.

2. The rationale for Rocket Phonics at The Willows

At The Willows, we believe that it is every child's right to be taught the fundamental skills of reading and writing. Through a high quality Phonic and Reading programme we believe that our children can become confident readers who not only have a passion for reading, but also have as a minimum, a basic level of functional literacy that enables them to keep themselves safe and lead a life as independent as possible. In order to meet these targets to provide children with the skills they need to phonetically decode the words they read and then encode them into the words they write, we chose to follow the Rocket Phonics Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme. This programme was chosen as it directly caters for the specific needs of our pupils, for example:

- Designed with SEND in mind "The aim of Rocket Phonics is that all pupils, regardless of SEND, are included in the main teaching input".
- Designed by a teacher with SEND experience.
- Reading is at the heart of how phonics is taught through this programme through 'Big Books'
- Engages the pupils.

- Enables constant opportunities for over learning
- Fosters a love for reading
- Draws the pupils in.
- Allows time for our pupils to embed the sounds due to the teaching sequence with 2 sounds being taught a week as opposed to 4 sounds a week.
- The planning schedule allows time for consolidation within its scheme of work after teaching a block of sounds, which is needed for our pupils where overlearning is crucial to enable retention within the long term memory.
- Support network available along with CPD videos available online.
- Flexibility with the teaching sequence/pace which enables us to match to the needs of our children.
- Provides opportunities to teach pupils when they are past formal phonics (Rocket Phonics Next Steps).

3. The implementation of Rocket Phonics at The Willows

At The Willows, Phonics is taught through the repetition of predictable routines. It is through this repetition of predictable routines that allows children to focus on the skills that are being taught.

Each lesson, as designed by Rocket Phonics, follows the 4 part method for teaching phonics. These 4 parts are as follows:

- revisit and review
- teach
- practise
- apply

Rocket Phonics teaches one letter-sound correspondence over two days. The first day focuses on blending skills and the second day focuses on segmenting skills. Reading and writing are interlinked so there will naturally be overlap, but by separating the skills and spreading them across two days the teacher has greater clarity over which skill is being taught, practised or applied. The children have more time and more opportunity to learn, practise and apply the skills using the new letter-sound correspondences before moving on. The two-day pattern is repeated twice through the week.

However, this structure of teaching 2 sounds a week is seen as a maximum, if children need a slower pace of learning teachers are given the freedom to

reduce this to 1 sound a week in order to enable those pupils to fully embed what is being taught.

4. The implementation of Reading at The Willows

Alongside the teaching of Rocket Phonics at The Willows, children across the whole school are required to have reading books that are at a suitable level. Within phonic lessons, it is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that children are exposed to the Rocket Phonics reading books that match their current phonic level.

Outside of these lessons, the childrens reading books need to be either phonetically decodable to match the level of phonic knowledge or reading level assigned to them after their reading test. In some instances, due to the needs of our children, children will be assigned two separate book levels. One to correspond to their word reading level and a second to match their level of comprehension.

After children are given at least one book that matches their level, they are able to choose any book that matches their interest to promote a love and curiosity for reading.

5. Role of the Head of English in relation to Phonics and Reading

The Head of English in relation to Phonics and Reading has a variety of roles including:

- leading the production of this policy and other curriculum documentation including the scheme of work
- monitoring the standards of children's work and the quality of teaching.
- liaising with teaching staff/English HLTA to provide opportunities for intervention work to help with those pupils who are struggling or those pupils who are more able to ensure that children can progress to their fullest.
- ensuring continuity and progression throughout school

- supporting colleagues in their development of the lesson plans, the implementation of the scheme of work, in assessment and record keeping
- monitoring progress
- having an overview of the ordering and organising of resources for Reading and Phonics.
- Ensuring all resources are appropriate and up to date.
- providing staff with information on developments, resources etc.
- completing a S.E.F. for the subject (including an action plan) evaluating strengths and weaknesses and indicating areas for further improvement.

6. Assessment, reporting & recording

All children complete a baseline assessment during transition week to ascertain the level of their phonic knowledge to ensure that they can be placed in a group that correctly matches their ability to ensure that there is no loss in the sequence of teaching.

During the last weeks of each half term, class teachers are to conduct end of half term assessments. The purpose of these assessments is to enable class teachers to identify gaps in learning/lack of retention within particular sounds/areas.

Once these areas have been identified, they are to be passed onto the Head of English who by working alongside the class teacher can ascertain whether a specific intervention is required either within class or with the English HLTA.

Furthermore, it is at these review points, although not exclusively, when the groupings of children can be discussed.

7. Review and Monitoring

The Head of English supports colleagues in the teaching of phonics and reading, giving them information about current developments in the subject and by providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school. The co-ordinator is also responsible for Professional Development

Staff need to feel confident to deliver this aspect of the curriculum, and support will be offered through in-service training on specific issues, regular updates to staff

from the Head of English and with networking opportunities with other schools and co-ordinators. Training for those delivering this area of work is offered via training from the Head of English, external training (Rocket Phonics) and opportunities to observe other professionals teaching phonics and reading.