



Phonics and Reading at Mapledown School: Rationale and Information

At Mapledown School we place a very high priority on early reading, including the teaching of phonics. All pupils engage in a robust and highly structured literacy programme with the aim of ensuring all of our pupils leave school, well on their way to achieving their potential.

Phonics instruction is where pupils are taught the relationships between the letters [graphemes] of written language and the individual sounds [phonemes] of spoken language. Phonemic awareness is defined as the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words.

The National Literacy Trust explains that: *'Introducing young children to the joy and wonder of books requires a systematic teaching of phonics.'* It goes on to describe widely agreed systems of phonics teaching:

- *Synthetic phonics*: The most widely used approach associated with the teaching of reading in which phonemes [sounds] associated with particular graphemes [letters] are pronounced in isolation and blended together [synthesised]
- *Analytical phonics*: Associated with the teaching of reading in which the phonemes associated with particular graphemes are not pronounced in isolation. Children identify [analyse] the common phoneme in a set of words in which each word contains the phoneme under study. For example, teacher and pupils discuss how the following words are alike; pat, park, push and pen.
- *Linguistic phonics*: This system can be taught systematically and is also synthetic as it considers how sounds and graphemes are built into words. This method is highly recommended by Ann Sullivan [2023] in the teaching of phonics to pupils with complex needs as it can offer a logical teaching sequence, which can support pupils with complex needs to develop a 'schema' [mental plan] of the relationship between graphemes and phonemes [e.g. they focus on one phoneme and then learn all graphemes that can represent that at one time].

There has been a long standing debate over the best way to teach early reading, and this area is widely researched. Wyse and Bradbury, 2022 discuss the three main orientations to teaching early reading as being:

- *Synthetic phonics*: a strong focus on teaching phonemes and letters separately from practising reading of whole texts. Decodable books [reading schemes] are often used in the early stages with very controlled vocabulary.
- *Whole language*: a strong focus on whole texts from the beginning, using 'real' books [standard publications] with the aim of motivating readers. The whole language approach is driven by reading for meaning, Phonics teaching is incidental through the texts being used and is not systematic.
- *Balanced instruction*: strong focus on the balance between real texts and systematic phonics teaching, It places importance on comprehending the meaning of written language, carefully balanced with acquiring a range of skills and knowledge.

Mapledown Reading Curriculum: Intent

As with all areas of the curriculum, the teaching aims and outcomes with reading relate directly to the individuals' needs. Students are encouraged to foster an enjoyment of sharing books and stories, and to spend time both independently and with others, experiencing literature.

Reading begins with pre-reading skills and activities, and we interpret a student's ability to 'read' at an individual developmental level. We aim to teach our students, not only how to decode text, symbols and pictures, but also how to develop imagination, creativity, positive book behaviours, creativity and to form their own narratives. We also use books to support pupils' understanding of the world around them; such as developing understanding of emotions, daily routines and activities, understanding our bodies and environment, independence skills and appropriate behaviour. Books are used in a cross curricular approach and often provide a focus for learning each term.

Sensory stories have been created and are used across the school, particularly in Learning Zone 3 to support lessons. These stories fully immerse our students to provide a multi-sensory storytelling experience whilst supporting them to develop a variety of skills.

Pleasure in books, stories and poetry is fostered at every stage. Teachers read to their students, allow them to handle books freely and encourage them to respect books. Each class has opportunities to be read, to partake in shared reading and to read independently. This holistic approach to reading aims to consistently encourage a love for reading across the school. Themed days and weeks such as 'World Book Week' enables the whole school to be immersed in focused texts and different genres of books.

Access for all

At Mapledown, the majority of our students are not able to use verbal speech at a level that meets their communication requirements and rely on the use of AAC to communicate and access all curriculum areas. We know that students learning to communicate with AAC require systematic phonics and word study instruction. Spelling is what enables students to eventually communicate every word that they want to, or that they do not have a symbol for, therefore becoming autonomous communicators.

Research shows that phonological awareness is often delayed in students who are learning to use AAC as they don't get to practise learning to manipulate, isolate and delete sounds. Instead, their phonological awareness tends to develop later, as they learn to read. A comprehensive literacy curriculum, including a robust systematic synthetic phonics programme will help them develop phonological awareness, with the aim of becoming proficient readers, writers and communicators.

Mapledown Reading Curriculum: Implementation

All students at Mapledown engage with a comprehensive Literacy curriculum. Teaching is adapted to meet individual students' needs and abilities. Student's progress in reading is assessed through KPLTs where relevant and all are being baselined in our curriculum, which will be updated termly in February, May and October [enabling no lost learning when students transition each academic year in September]. Student's ongoing assessments and teacher judgements determine the specific approach for the implementation of reading and phonics.

All our students engage with daily shared reading working with letters and sounds [Twinkl Phonics Scheme - TPS Phase 1], and Independent and Self-Selected Reading. Our *Formal* and *Reaching Higher* students also engage with reading comprehension, letters and sounds [TPS Phase 2+].

Reading is taught by each class teacher, within the class group, supported by the Learning Support Assistants. There is a range of resources within the classrooms appropriate to the needs of students. Additional materials can be found around the school, e.g. in the school library or on the shared area of our computer system. The well-stocked library is available to all pupils and teachers and books/resources can be borrowed, there are also reading areas or boxes in each classroom.

Pre-Formal and Semi-Formal Readers

As part of our approach, we recognise that early reading and phonics instruction may span a longer period of time due to the nature of the needs of the pupils. Some pupils may need to work at an emergent level for some time, before being ready to embark fully on the formal TPS programme. These are generally those pupils working within the Pre/Semi-Formal level of our curriculum. These students will engage in Phase 1 of TPS alongside elements of Jane Farrall's approach, experiencing, recognising and creating environmental sounds with a drip method of introducing phonemes and graphemes throughout. These students access Phase 1 phonics through a multi-sensory approach, to support the pupil in becoming familiar with these sounds, phonemes and graphemes e.g. feeling sensory letters, making instruments, creating sounds in their environment such as drumming on playground equipment, searching for letters with sand/water, exploring alphabet books and listening to songs etc

Phonics for all

For pupils who are working at Formal and Reaching Higher levels of our curriculum we have adopted the DfE approved Twinkl Phonics Scheme [TPS]. This synthetic phonics programme ensures that all pupils build on their knowledge of the alphabetic code in a structured way, to support the development of the phonics to read and spell. The TPS is implemented and delivered to meet the varying needs of each individual. The Jane Farrall strategies may be used to ensure accessibility for all and to promote and enable success.

The TPS is taught following the given structure and order of the phases as pupils progress. One whole school adaptation to the programme following an initial roll out of the programme is that rather than focus on 1 Phase 1 pack each day, classes will have 1 pack for a period of 5 weeks with valuable teacher judgement directing which order the pack is delivered e.g. teachers may feel their class benefits from part of the pack [there are 5 parts to each pack in total] being repeated for 5 days before changing the following week, and some championing a full 5-part pack being delivered across 1 week and repeated 5 times. Regular assessments are made throughout each pack through observations, staff feedback and 1:1 review sessions. Particularly when students are learning phonemes this agile approach to phonics implementation allows for teachers to compare and contrast students' understanding which accommodates for the fact most pupils are unable to verbalise the phonemes, making assessment of their knowledge and understanding more challenging. Additional individual adaptations are made by the teachers to enable more access to the resources and activities as needed e.g. the use of technology to enable access to the materials or sensory resources for pupils with visual impairments.

All staff model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lessons and across the curriculum. Ongoing CPD opportunities for staff enables their practice to be exemplary and they have the phonic skills to support their students. We also have a strong focus on language development for our students because we know that skills in communication are critical for reading and writing in all subjects. It will enable advocacy, and for our students to be contributing members of society in life beyond Mapledown.

<u>Literacy elements and resources implemented daily for students at Mapledown School</u>			
	Pre-formal and Semi-formal learners	Formal learners	Reaching Higher learners
Reading	Shared reading Independent exploration of books/texts	Shared reading Independent exploration of books/texts Reading Comprehension through Twinkl books [all bands] based on BLANKs	Reading Comprehension through Twinkl books [all bands] based on BLANKs Level Questioning [Levels 1-4]

		Level Questioning [Level 1+2]	
Reading Scheme	n/a	Twinkl Rhino Readers [Levels 2-6 as appropriate]	Twinkl Rhino Readers [Levels 2-6 as appropriate] and self-chosen texts
Twinkl Phonic Scheme	Phase 1	Phase 1 + 2	Phase 2+
Writing	Writing with adults - Predictable Chart Writing Writing from adults Independent writing	Writing with adults - Predictable Chart Writing Independent writing	As previous plus introduction of writing conventions Independent writing.

Independent Reading

At Mapledown we want all of our pupils to have access to books that they are able to read and/or explore independently, whatever level they are working at. As part of our literacy curriculum opportunities are given for this each day, for all pupils. Facilitated through a mix of banded books and books about subjects of interest to students [not necessarily banded but enjoyed].

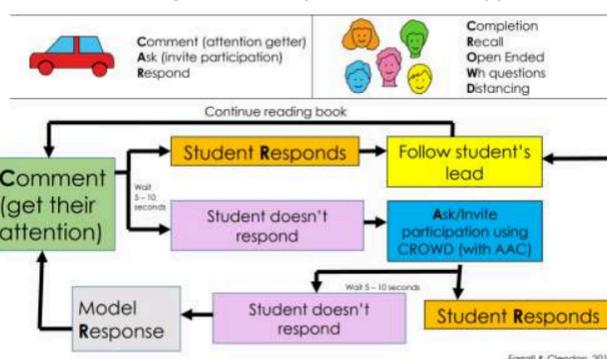
Students are given access to age and stage appropriate books and texts that are of interest to them. The books/texts may need to be made independently accessible through technology [eye-gaze, audio books, touch screens and talking books] or through laminating a book to make it more robust and adding 'page turners/fluffers' to assist physical access. They will be given opportunities to browse these books independently and learn how they can use reading for pleasure, this is normally through a whole class session after lunch each day. Students working within the Formal and Reaching Higher areas of the curriculum have independent reading opportunities to encourage and develop reading fluency through engaging with reading books at their comprehension and fluency level, this will include a mix of self-chosen books and TPS banded books. Our aim is that through daily engagement with reading, students will be able to develop the skills required to decode print in their environment in order to be as independent as possible in life beyond Mapledown, and to develop a love of reading for leisure, this includes reading images and symbols as well as text. Parents are encouraged to read with their children and any support with how to do this is discussed on an individual basis when requested.

We understand that due to the complex needs of our students, some may find segmenting and blending phonemes to decode words extremely challenging. We will support those students to develop their knowledge of sight words through targeted individual teaching using Twinkl banded books or high frequency words.

Shared Reading

All students have the opportunity to engage in shared reading as part of their timetable each day, normally through a cross curricular approach. All staff are trained in strategies to support pupils in engaging with shared reading at a level appropriate to their needs and the provision of robust AAC systems for all students are a vital part of this engagement.

Shared Reading Flowchart of CROWD in CAR approaches:



Pre-Writing and Writing Skills

Communication through the written word is taught to all pupils, but is adapted to allow pupils to record their learning in whichever mode is appropriate to them. The written word is of importance both as a means of self-expression and as a method of creative writing, non-fiction writing, reporting and recording.

It is appropriate for some students to develop skills such as, holding writing implements and mark making, free writing/mark making, pre-writing patterns, writing patterns, typing, tracing and copying letter formation to all lead towards improved fine and gross motor skills. In cases where this is not appropriate activities such as the use of symbols, sensory and small world exploration to support choice making and creative writing. Predictable Chart Writing is engaged across the school.

Writing within our context is about developing pupils' understanding and awareness of their ability to effect change by making choices and using marking and writing to communicate and create. Writing skills are practised and developed across the curriculum through lessons and activities both in the classroom and their local environment.

Mapledown Reading Curriculum: Impact

Assessment:

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any student needing additional support as soon as they need it.

Formative assessment is used *daily* in class to identify any students requiring additional support or further challenge. Assessment for learning is used *weekly* to assess and address gaps, and secure fluency of graphemes, phonemes, words, spelling and recognition or environmental sounds. These assessments will also enable staff to record when skills are starting, acquired or mastered. Evidence for Learning is used by all to capture evidence of students' progress with reading, as it is across the curriculum.

Summative assessment is used termly [at half term markers of February, May and October] to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any pupils needing additional support and to plan and deliver the support required. Summative assessment is also used to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of young people, whilst also identifying any additional support or training required for staff. Pupil Progress Meetings are held throughout the year within which assessments made are discussed.

Students will be assessed as ready to leave the TPS programme when they have either read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words a minute, or if reasonable adjustments and differentiation have been made but the student is not accessing, engaging or progressing through the programme at which point they will solely follow the Jane Farrall approach to early reading before hopefully then beginning the TPS programme again when ready.

This rationale has been written with reference to the following policies, programmes and research:

- Twinkl Phonics Scheme
- Koppenhaver, D and Erickson, K. (2019). *Comprehensive Literacy for All: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write*. USA: Brookes Publishing Co
- Wyse, D. & Bradbury, A. (2022). Reading wars or reading reconciliation? A critical examination of robust research evidence, curriculum policy and teachers' practices for teaching phonics and reading. *Review of Education*, 10, e3314. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3314>
- Woodlands School, Surrey: *Reading and Phonics Teaching at Woodlands School*