

Phonics at Wilson Stuart

Rationale

In a world where reading is at the heart of everything we do, students need to be given the opportunity to become fluent readers. This can only be achieved when our students become successful with, not only, reading the words on the page but also understand what they have read. Decoding words enables learners to access new language autonomously; learners can engage with vocabulary acquisition, across all subjects, more successfully in and beyond the classroom.

Intent

Our intent at Wilson Stuart is to provide opportunities for students to develop as confident readers who can succeed as individuals and contribute to their community and the wider world. Our EYFS classes encourage students to begin to use their phonological awareness through their continuous provision and within targeted sessions, they also begin to teach pre phonics with small, targeted groups. This will enable those, who will move on to access phonics, to develop some of the skills needed to blend and segment sounds. It will also support those who will use alternative communication aids (AAC) to develop listening skills.

To allow our students to develop effective decoding skills and reading fluency with comprehension, we have chosen to use a synthetic phonics programme called Read, Write, Inc produced by Ruth Miskin. We do understand that each student learns and accesses their learning in unique ways and therefore, we adjust the programme to best fit the needs of our students.

- We value reading skills and phonics skills as life skills and are dedicated to enabling our students to become lifelong readers.
- We value and encourage the students to have a Love of Reading and recognise that this starts with the foundations of acquiring letter sounds, segmenting and blending skills.

Implementation

At Wilson Stuart we will support students to become readers, where possible, through clear leadership, consistent teaching, learning approaches and assessment. Reading teachers, with support from the Reading Lead, draw upon careful observations and continuous assessment to ensure students are challenged and to identify students who may need additional support.

EYFS

Promoting phonological awareness underpins our whole EYFS curriculum. Rhymes, rhythms and songs are incorporated into daily routines, for example saying good morning, saying goodbye, tidying up. We value that transition times are opportunities to promote rhyme and rhythm awareness. Children can become familiar with rhythm, pitch, repetition and vocabulary which all come together to help children become able to recognise patterns of language and develop sound discrimination. When planning play and learning opportunities we use children's interests where possible to keep children motivated and enthusiastic, for example if they're into animals, we encourage the children to make animal noises when

playing in the small world. Children are encouraged to copy sounds animals make. Children are encouraged to make sounds when playing. When moving around school or exploring the outdoor environment, children are encouraged to listen out for sounds, for example birdsong, traffic noises, etc. Children are encouraged to identify the sound and encouraged to copy.

Our EYFS curriculum encompasses a playful multi-sensory learning approach/experience to pre-phonics learning, through games, rhyming, singing and music. We recognise that it is crucial that Phase 1 pre phonics is part of our day-to-day practice. We use the Letters and Sounds document and carefully select specific aspects to work on with individual children who have been assessed at EYFS range 4 and are now ready to access pre phonics activities. Some of our EYFS learners are being slowly introduced to RWI.

Primary and Secondary Challenge

- In Primary Challenge, Phonics is taught five times a week for 45 minutes.
- The groups are based around the most recent RWI assessments (carried out by the Reading Lead and the Intervention Teacher) and these are carried out every half term to ensure that students are in an appropriate group.
- Students take home a reading book each week which is based on their phonic stage. This also supports the students' comprehension skills.
- Students are taught in small steps with plenty of opportunities to recap on their prior learning to help with their retention and to avoid cognitive overload.
- One to one interventions are carried out by the Reading Lead, if students within the Primary Challenge pathway have been identified by the reading teachers as needing more support. For those students that are identified within Secondary Challenge 3 class, the intervention teacher will run one to one or small group interventions to help close the gaps. Challenge 4 have a timetabled 30-minute phonic session three times a week.
- Reading teachers have frequent coaching sessions to ensure that they are remaining upskilled and that the teaching of RWI phonics remains consistent across the primary phase and coaching takes place in the secondary phase.
- For students on the Challenge Secondary Pathway - during the weekly LOR English lesson teachers or TAs listen to the student read and send home the corresponding RWI Book Bag book matched to their phonic stage.
- All students in the Primary Challenge class are given the opportunity to take part in RWI phonics for the entirety of their primary journey. There may be some children in Monkeys too.
- Teachers will use their judgements, alongside discussions with the Reading Lead, as to whether they feel students are not progressing with their phonetic understanding both in Primary and Secondary Challenge classes. The Reading Lead will then work with the student and look through assessments to see whether further interventions would be beneficial. If not, then we will look at what else we can put into place to support as they become functional readers. (Sight Word Reading programme)
- Students following a different pathway may be given experiences of phonics suited to their Learning Goals and the pathway that they follow.

Impact

Through the teaching of systematic phonics, our aim is for students to become confident readers in the wider community. When phonics is embedded, students can focus on developing their fluency and comprehension as they move through the school and various pathways.

- Attainment in phonics is measured against the RWI assessments and our small steps tracker, this ensures that gaps and misconceptions are addressed quickly.
- Reading is the key to all learning, so the impact of students becoming confident readers goes beyond the phonics lessons.
- Where it is deemed appropriate, there is the opportunity for students to complete the KS1 phonics check as an additional form of assessment.

Our Rationale for a different approach

Reading is at the heart of everything we do, however, some students do not access learning in the same way that others do. Learning to read through phonics requires students to retain newly taught sounds and previously taught sounds and then blend and segment. For those Primary aged students, when they reach Building block 2 on our Developmental Literacy Skills Map and assessed at EFL Basic 2/3, we give them the opportunity to learn to read using Read Write Inc (RWI). Phonological awareness, Phase 1 phonics (Letters and Sounds) and communication skills have been embedded through EYFS and for many also Key stage 1.

For those students who are on the phonics programme, they will continue through primary, and their progress will be assessed using phonics assessments, reading fluency and comprehension assessments. This evidence is collected to identify those who are still able to access the programme but may need more time on the RWI programme in Secondary as part of the English curriculum for the Challenge pathway. At the point of Key stage 2 to 3 transition a decision is made as to whether the programme is the right approach for them. This is a complex decision that involves different members of the team and as such there are several factors that are considered when making this decision. For example, we look at their assessments over time and whether they have made consistent progress through the scheme. We also consider where they are on the programme as well as whether they could continue to make timely progress in Key stage 3. The secondary department have a regular intake of year 7 students from different academic establishments, for these new students we conduct reading, phonics, and communication baseline assessments. This will then inform our decision as to whether the RWI programme is an appropriate addition to their education at Wilson Stuart.

Many of our students at Wilson Stuart cannot access systematic teaching of phonics through the RWI programme, so for those Primary and Secondary students following our Explore pathway we adapt the way we teach reading. Symbols and signs are a daily part of our communication at Wilson Stuart and for some of our students, we teach them to read symbols and Makaton signs. They are familiar with the symbols and signs that are used regularly and can express what the symbol or sign means either verbally or through action or sign. The symbol or sign is also attributed to a word which means that the students are exposed to words consistently through the day as the symbols/signs are shown and the word spoken. Over time, students can make a link between the symbol that they read and the word that links with the symbol. For our primary and secondary SLD learners, they will then - over time - become more familiar with the word that they see and thus the symbol becomes less visible. We call this whole word sight vocabulary. Many of our students access reading using this approach and focus on key functional words relating to their context. (Sight Word Reading Programme).