



Phonics and Early Reading at Horn's Mill

The Department for Education national curriculum for England has clearly defined goals for the development of pupils' English skills. Key elements in the reading curriculum are aimed at enabling all pupils to read fluently by the completion of their primary education. An important goal of the writing programme is to improve pupils' spelling by teaching them the relationship between sounds and letters.

A crucial component in achieving these goals is phonics, which features prominently in Reception, Year One and Year Two. The purpose of incorporating phonics into primary education is to enable young learners to connect spoken sounds (phonemes) with written symbols (graphemes). These are referred to as Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs).

We have chosen to follow the Read Write Inc Phonics scheme at Horn's Mill. We refer to this in school as Ready Steady Read (RSR).

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage prepares children for entering the National Curriculum in Year 1. Children are introduced to phonics in order to help them "crack the reading code". They are encouraged to link letters with sounds and to decode words in order to read them aloud. Children learn common expectation words and begin to read short sentences containing the alphabet sounds and at least 12 different digraphs. As beginning writers, they are not expected to spell correctly, but rather to use the rules they learn to spell words according to their sounds so their writing is phonetically plausible.

RSR in Reception:

Children begin phonics sessions straight away in Reception, to ensure they are given the best possible start to their reading journey. RSR starts as a short 20-minute session, before increasing at a steady rate until the class reach the full 50-minute session. Children begin their learning as a whole class and are then grouped with the rest of KS1 from October half term onwards.

Key Stage 1: Year 1

Reading

Building on the phonic knowledge gained in their Foundation Year, pupils practice segmenting and blending the sounds of unfamiliar words, and increase their reading abilities by learning more GPCs. As they continue to practice their segmenting and blending skills, these become easier and less overt, and their decoding become smoother. Children begin to sight-read words as their reading develops.

The curriculum states that by the end of Year 1 pupils need to fulfill the following statutory requirements:

- Name the letters of the alphabet;
- Use the names of the alphabet letters to distinguish alternative spellings of the same sound (e.g. to, too, two);
- Use spelling rules for making words plural by adding "s" or "es";
- Use spelling rules for adding the third person singular marker to verbs (For example, change "I look" to "she looks"; "I dance" to "He dances");
- Add "ing" and "ed" to verbs (e.g. change "help" to "helping" or "helped");
- Add "er" and "est" endings to nouns (e.g. change "help" to "helper" and adjectives (e.g. change "quick" to "quicker" or "quickest");
- Apply simple spelling rules
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Writing

Writing is a much more complex skill than reading. Learners need to develop the physical skill of holding a pencil and making legible letters. They also need to transpose the sounds of words they hear into written symbols. Therefore, writing does not generally develop as quickly as reading. The expectation for Year 1 is that pupils write simple dictated sentences using familiar GPCs and common exception words (words for which phonics does not "work" because they do not follow regular spelling rules).

Key Stage 1: Year 2

When they enter Year 2, pupils are expected to be able to read common words by sight without needing to blend sounds, to be familiar with common exception words such as "you", "many" and "people", and to sound out unfamiliar words fluently based on their familiarity with common graphemes.

If a pupil's knowledge of phonics is not sufficiently developed by the end of the Autumn term in Year 2, teachers are advised to help them to catch up by continuing to use the RWI phonics programmes.

The focus of Year 2 is to build on pupil's prior knowledge to improve their reading accuracy and fluency. Statutory requirements include the following:

- Pupils' decoding skills become automatic
- Their reading becomes fluent and accurate
- They can read books of a suitable reading level aloud, easily sounding out unfamiliar words
- They can read most familiar words quickly and accurately
- They can read words of two or more syllables that contain familiar graphemes
- They recognise alternate sounds represented by specific graphemes

Spelling

The Year 2 curriculum begins with revision of alphabet letters and their sounds, including consonant and vowel two-letter combinations or digraphs. An example of a consonant digraph is "ph" which represents the sound "f", while an example of a vowel digraph is the combination of "a" and "i" in the word "hair". The curriculum specifies that pupils should learn to spell by dividing spoken words into individual phonemes and being able to represent these sounds by written graphemes (letters).

Pupils also begin to learn some of the irregularities of English spelling. They're introduced to the fact that grapheme/phoneme correspondence in English is sometimes irregular and that there is not always a logical connection between sound and symbol. They learn to spell common exception words and become familiar with some of the quirky spelling variations which make reading English such a challenge. These include:

- Words with silent letters, such as "write" and "knight";
- Different ways to spell the same sound, such as "night" and "knight", or "write" and "right" (homophones);
- Irregular readings that do not correspond with spelling, such as the "le" ending in words like "table".

(Source: Department for Education: National Curriculum in England, September 2013. English Programmes of Study: Key Stages 1 and 2)