



Reading at Queenborough School & Nursery

Introduction

'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 working with others: in school, in training and at work. 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.' **(The Reading Framework, DfE, July 2021)**

At Queenborough School & Nursery, we understand that teaching our children to read is one of our most important functions. We recognise that the majority of our children enter school with levels of literacy that are typically below the age-related standard and the dangers of not accelerating children's levels of literacy, particularly reading, in terms of their ability to access the wider curriculum to ensure that they are ready for each stage of their educational journey. Therefore, from the moment our children join us, every effort and available resource is directed towards ensuring that our children leave each key stage with a reading ability that will allow them to access the next stage of their education, as well as the confidence to enjoy reading to its fully potential.

Our principles

In order to achieve our vision that every child leaves Queenborough School & Nursery as a proficient reader, we adhere to the following principles:

- A consistent and rigorous approach to the delivery of Systematic Synthetic Phonics in EYFS and Key Stage 1;
- A commitment to ensuring that children in EYFS and Key Stage 1 *keep up*, in order to avoid the challenges of *catching up* later on;
- Ensuring that children are only asked to read books themselves which they are able to decode phonetically, while exposing them to the richness of storytelling through adults' reading aloud;
- Swift intervention by reading specialists for all children identified as at risk of falling behind in their reading;
- Adults who model a love of reading and an excitement to share and explore texts with children;
- An authentic experience book selection across the school which mirrors the process of attending a library or bookshop;
- Fidelity to the simple view of reading and recognition of the link between word-reading and comprehension;
- A whole-school language framework which provides a deliberate and progressive approach to the teaching of vocabulary across the school;
- A reading spine which sets out our children's entitlement to read and explore high quality texts throughout their time with us;
- Reading spaces throughout the school which encourage the children to take the time to enjoy books;
- A wider curriculum with literacy at its centre, with opportunities for children to immerse themselves in reading in as many curriculum areas as possible.

Systematic Synthetic Phonics

At Queenborough, we recognise the extensive research that indicates that Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) is the most effective method of teaching early reading. Therefore, in EYFS and Key Stage 1, our most significant priority is to teach children grapheme-phoneme correspondences and the skill of blending sounds to be able to read words. We understand that reading and spelling are reversible processes and therefore children are taught to write by segmenting sounds within a word in order to write it.

The school has been successful in teaching early reading through its own long-term planning of the Letters and Sounds Framework. However, we recognise that the Reading Framework (July 2021) advises that schools implement an

approved SSP programme and we are in the process of investigating programmes in order to determine which is the right one for our children.

While we hope that the implementation of such a programme will provide us with further consistency in the teaching of SSP, we are confident that our own long-term planning of phonics is robust and consistent across EYFS and Key Stage 1. In order to achieve this fidelity, teachers adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use of consistent terminology in the teaching of phonics at all stages (for example, the term *split digraph* will always be used and never *magic e*);
- Use of consistent lesson resources and display materials to assist the teaching of SSP;
- Teachers understand daily, weekly and longer-term milestones in terms of children's phonics knowledge and what the objectives for each session are;
- Expectation that all children engage and participate;
- Children are shown from the beginning how to use resources to assist them;
- A small and common set of exception words shared by EYFS and Key Stage 1 and a consistent approach to teaching these words;
- A consistent approach to introducing lower and upper-case letters and introducing children to the names of letters;
- Ensuring that children's reading books match with taught GPC ability;
- An incremental increase from the start of EYFS to the end of Key Stage 1 to the amount of SSP teaching each day;
- Daily phonics lessons which incorporate the following opportunities as appropriate to the objective:
 - Revision of GPCs taught in earlier lessons;
 - Introduction of new GPCs with links to previous learning;
 - Opportunities to practise reading and writing words containing known GPCs;
 - Teaching how to read and write common exception words;
 - Opportunities to practise reading 'decodable' phrases, sentences and books which include known GPCs and exception words;
 - Opportunities to practise segmenting words into their individual sounds;
 - Teaching and allowing opportunities to practise correct pencil grip;
 - Teaching the correct entry and exit point of each letter, only incorporating entry strokes when children are ready for this;
 - Opportunities for dictation from the teacher, writing only words with known GPCs and exception words;
 - Maximisation of learning time for all children and no activities that involve waiting for a turn;
 - Activities which maximise the number of words that children can read and spell;
 - Full engagement of all children, praising and rewarding them for their effort and progress;
 - Assessment for learning opportunities to determine next steps and identify children who need immediate extra support.

Decodable books and texts for children to read

As a school, we have invested significantly in reading books which correspond to our approach to teaching SSP. This allows our children the opportunity, at school and at home, to practise previously taught and new GPCs and their ability to blend through a meaningful context, while also feeling like a *real* reader. These books allow our children to experience success in reading from the beginning as we recognise the link between children struggling to read and becoming demoralised with learning to read. We also ensure that the books that children read at home run slightly behind the GPCs that they are being taught in school so that they only experience texts with new GPCs at school where the most qualified adults can support them in successfully decoding these words.

Children at risk of falling behind in EYFS/ Year 1

While all members of staff share a commitment to ensuring that every child keeps up from the start and therefore reaches the end of Year 1 with the ability to decode at an age-appropriate level, we also recognise why this will be

harder for some children, specifically those with additional educational needs. We understand that children who fail to reach the expected level of reading by Year 1 will struggle to access the curriculum in Year 2 and beyond. That is why children who we do not feel are on track to pass the Phonics Screening Check at the end of Year 1 are identified swiftly and targeted intervention is put into place. This includes:

- **Reading Recovery**- a literacy programme designed for the lowest achieving children aged around six that enables them to reach age-expected levels within 20 weeks. It involves a short series of daily one-to-one lessons for 30 minutes with a specially trained teacher. The school employs two Reading Recovery Teachers.
- **Additional Phonics Booster**- Small group of 1:1 phonics with a Teaching Assistant/ Specialist Reading Assistant to ensure child accelerates to the appropriate level of GPC knowledge.
- **Speech and Language Support**- Where we feel a child's reading ability has been impeded by either their speech or language, we also employ two specialist Speech and Language Assistants to work with these children. The school also invests in external support from a Speech and Language therapist on a consultancy basis.

Children who enter Year 2 below the age-related standard for their reading

We recognise that children entering Year 2 and beyond without an age-related ability to read are at critical risk of failing to access the curriculum. Furthermore, these children are at risk of learning to dislike reading as it becomes a task that they find difficult. Therefore, every available resource is directed to ensuring that these children have the opportunity to catch up with their peers in a way that builds their confidence and subsequent enjoyment of reading. Every child in Year 2 and beyond who did not pass the Phonics Screening Check at Year 1 remains on the class provision map for the duration of their time at the school to ensure that their reading provision and progress remains under scrutiny. Support for children in Key Stage 2 could look as follows:

- **Daily 1:1 reading with an adult**- A daily reading slot with an adult to accelerate reading progress.
- **1:1/ Small group phonics intervention**- An intervention devised by the class teacher and delivered by a Teaching Assistant/ Specialist Reading Assistant to address gaps in GPCs.
- **Better Reading Support Partnerships**- A trained Better Reading Support Partner providing a 10- week programme of three 15-minute one-to-one sessions per week for pupils who have fallen behind at reading. The Partner uses simple assessments to select three texts for each pupil to read in each session. They provide a relaxed environment that gives pupils the time and space to practise and apply the skills taught by their teachers and to talk about their reading with an interested adult.
- **Precision teaching for recognition of exception words**- A daily intervention delivered by a Teaching Assistant, providing regular practice to aid the retention of skills and facts after initial teaching.

Alternative approaches for children with specific needs and disabilities

Queenborough School & Nursery subscribes to the view that a SSP approach to the teaching of reading is the most effective. However, it is our experience that a small minority of children, such as those with dyslexia or other disabilities, encounter significant difficulty with this approach. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable pupils with disabilities to have full access to the curriculum and to be able to participate in it. Therefore, where the school has exhausted all attempts to teach a child to read through SSP, including implementing targeted support, and a child is still unable to grasp GPCs sufficiently to be able to access the curriculum, the Literacy Leaders and SENCO may be required to consider another approach to teaching that child to read.

Exposure to other books

While reading decodable books, we recognise that the majority of our children's working memory will be directed to decoding words. As these books are written to be decodable, they often follow highly simplified narrative structure, which is typically below the child's level of comprehension. Furthermore, at this early stage, children may be decoding at a rate which is not sufficiently fluent to forge meaning from the text. As such, while we might engage the children in discussion about these books, they will not be used as a means of assessing a child's level of comprehension or for teaching comprehension skills.

Instead, we provide an environment which is rich in high quality children's literature and adults who read aloud to children regularly so that they can be exposed to words and narratives that allow them to draw meaning from texts, make predictions, state opinions, draw comparisons and generally engage in reading behaviours that they will eventually be able to perform upon mastering the ability to decode fluently.

Reading beyond Key Stage 1 for children working within the age-related standard

Once teachers are confident that children are able to decode effectively and have mastered the GPCs taught through our SSP teaching, they will move on to the school's reading model. In this model, books for each year group have been identified into three categories: *improving* for children who are still emerging into the age-related expectation; *challenging*, for children whose reading ability matches the age-related expectation; and *extreme*, for children's whose reading ability exceeds the age-related expectation. For children accessing *improving*, it is the expectation of teachers that every effort is put into developing these children's reading ability so that they accelerate towards being able to access those books in *challenging*.

Across the school, including in the classrooms and the library, books are divided into the same three categories and sub-divided by interest. This allows our children to have the authentic experience of choosing a book to read while ensuring that they select a book that is appropriate to their reading ability.

Story time

At Queenborough School & Nursery, it is the expectation that every teacher reads to their class every day. Books are selected from the Queenborough Reading Spine and will generally relate to a cross-curricular topic or the whole-school concepts for the term. Teachers will ensure that children are exposed to a wide range of texts which allow children to learn about lives and perspectives different from their own and which engage them on an emotional level. The choice of books that the teacher reads is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that our catalogue of high-quality literature remains current. Books that teachers choose to read aloud will:

- Elicit a strong emotional response from our children- curiosity, anger, excitement, laughter and, most importantly, empathy;
- Have a strong narrative that sustain multiple readings;
- Extend children's vocabulary;
- Help children to connect with who they are;
- Help children to understand the lives of people whose experiences and perspectives may be different from their own;
- (Where the books has illustrations) Have illustrations which are engaging and reflect children from all backgrounds and cultures.

Teachers will often revisit familiar books that have been read before, particularly in EYFS and Key Stage 1, so that children have the opportunity to deepen their understanding and heighten their emotional engagement with the book on each reading. Teachers encourage children to have favourite books as individuals and as classes which are celebrated within each classroom and around school as comfortable favourites that they can always return to. From September 2021, the school plans to invest significantly in the number of books that children have at home, providing each child with a set of re-readable favourites to explore with adults at home.

Whole-class teaching of reading in Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2, reading is taught as a lesson like any other. Teachers will use a combination of whole-texts and extracts as a means of teaching more advanced reading skills. In these lessons, teachers will ensure:

- Every child has the opportunity to read independently;
- No child will be waiting for another child to read;
- There is a clear understanding of the objective of the session in terms of the reading skill to be taught;
- There are opportunities to share thoughts, opinions and predictions about the text;
- Selected texts will be decodable so that teaching focus is on comprehension and wider reading skills.

Vocabulary development

At Queenborough School & Nursery, we understand that while children are learning to read, their exposure to decodable books is not sufficient to effectively build their vocabulary. We are acutely aware of the multitude of research which exposes the word deficit of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the years before school and the negative impact that starting school can have on widening gaps in literacy levels between socio-economic

group if this is not addressed. Therefore, we have designed and implemented our own whole-school language framework which is a deliberate and progressive tool for the explicit teaching of words across the school.

The model has Beck, Kukan and McKeown's 'Three Tiers' of vocabulary at its centre. Tier one words relate to those which children should naturally encounter through their everyday spoken language and interactions. Throughout the school, this tier of language remains high profile through adults relentlessly modelling and engaging children in conversation and the spoken word. In EYFS, there is a sharp focus on developing children's prepositional and functional vocabulary so that they are able to understand instructions and communicate their needs.

Tier two vocabulary relates to words which children need to understand in order to 'cross the lexical bar' that exists between spoken word and academic texts. Our whole-school language framework employs Averil Coxhead's 'Academic Word List' as a starting point for identifying words which our children should learn. These have been deliberately assigned to each year group depending on when we feel it is most appropriate for our children to encounter them and their meaning is taught to our children explicitly.

Finally, tier three words relate to those which are subject-specific and best introduced to children at the point that they will be used. For instance, the word *glacier* will be introduced to children as they are learning about the Arctic, as this is when they will need this word.

It is through our deliberate and progressive approach to the teaching of words that we provide our children with the best possible opportunities to comprehend words that they can decode but not comprehend.

Reading environment and book corners

Every classroom in school has a book corner; a space filled with familiar and new books of an age-appropriate reading age for the children. These are attractive and imaginative spaces in each classroom; however, the primary focus is on the choice of books and how they are organised in order to provide children with an authentic and accessible reading experience. In order to achieve this, all book corners will:

- Celebrate and showcase familiar and favourite reads;
- Contain the right number of books so that children are not overwhelmed which choice;
- Display books in such a way that they appear accessible and attractive, such as in a library or bookshop;
- Contain only books which are of an appropriate reading age for the class;
- Organise books into the three bands of the school's reading model and by interest genres.

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, we have made the deliberate decision not to include the phonetically decodable reading books in the book corners. This is to ensure that children do not experience confusion in choosing decodable books which do not relate to their current know GPCs. Instead, book corners in EYFS and Key Stage 1 are filled with wonderful texts that they can explore alongside adults and which will instil in them a love of story and reading.

Leadership and Management of Reading

At Queenborough School & Nursery, the responsibility for ensuring that reading remains high profile rests with the Headteacher and leadership team. Leaders of the school have an unwavering determination to ensuring that every child learns to read and will remove all barriers to this principle objective that might arise. In addition to the Headteacher and senior leaders, reading is led and managed by the school's literacy team, consisting of two Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), one for EYFS and one for Literacy. Leaders of the school ensure that all teaching staff, including those carrying our Initial Teacher Training programmes and apprentices, receive an ongoing programme of professional development in reading which includes:

- Annual updates in the school's approach to teaching SSP;
- An induction programme for new staff which details our approaches to the teaching of reading;
- Seasonal moderation sessions where teachers' reading assessment judgements are moderated against colleagues;
- Termly group coaching;

- Use of IRIS Connect software to record, re-watch and refine our teaching of reading, as well as invite feedback from others.

Leaders ensure that sufficient time is committed to reading each day and monitor the teaching of reading to ensure high quality, consistency and fidelity to the school's approach.