

The Reading Framework: teaching the foundations of literacy (July 2021)

A Summary

Aims:

- To set out research that underpins the importance of talk, stories and SSP (systematic synthetic phonics) in the teaching of reading
- To provide practical support for teaching and assessment; identify and improve weaknesses
- To explain the importance of SSP for older pupils who cannot decode
- To support parents

Overview:

- Why reading matters
- Language comprehension
- Teaching word reading and spelling
- Children at risk of reading failure
- Leadership and management

Sources of support:

- The EYFS Framework – sets out the standards
- Development Matters – the non-statutory guidance for EYFS
- SEND Code of Practice 2015 – guidance on the role of early years and how to identify and support SEN pupils including speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- English Hubs website – offer support on how to improve teaching of early language, phonics and reading
- Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) – various support from research

Section 1: The importance of reading and a conceptual model

I realized in a whiplash burst that those children, all mine for one year, might never reach their full potential as human beings if they never learned to read (Maryanne Wolf)

- Early talk contributes to children becoming more efficient in processing familiar words and developing larger expressive vocabularies
- If parents talk to their children early (not baby talk) then there is very little difference between economically advantaged and disadvantaged families
- All talk is useful – especially where the talk is child specific – stories, rhymes but in particular book talk
- If a gap is identified the only effective route is for children to be taught systematically to read as soon as they start school
- Not all difficulties are due to a lack of conversation or engagement with books
- Reading for Pleasure – PISA data confirms engagement in reading correlates with reading performance
- Performance stems from access to interesting and meaningful reading materials
- PIRLS 2006 suggests narrative texts rather than information texts made the most difference
- Children who are good at reading read more

- Without reading it is impossible for the individual to access any written information
- All educators have a fundamental role
- If children are taught well their backgrounds should rarely prevent their learning to read (ethnicity, level of disadvantage, disabilities, gender and summer born)

The simple view of reading:

- Language comprehension – not reading itself but rather the way in which we make sense of words, sentences and the wider language
- Decoding (word reading) – these terms are used interchangeably but reading unfamiliar words by sounding out then blending; reading familiar words accurately and silently at a glance therefore not needing to sound-out. Children need both skills to become good readers. Both skills require different types of teaching
- Composition (writing) – this is the reverse of comprehension
- Encoding (spelling) – this is the reverse of decoding (word reading)
- Expressive and receptive language – this develops through talking and listening

Section 2: Language Comprehension

- The number of words a child has heard and can speak by the age of 3 is a predictor of later language development
- A language rich environment is one where adults talk through out the day rather than displays of vocabulary
- The more children take part in conversations the more they will understand once they can read
- Progress depends on the adults engaging them in high quality dialogue and direct teaching
- Creating activities to encourage back and forth interactions
- Children need to be taught to listen and what good listening looks like
- 'hands up' can cut down on opportunities for learning and talk
- Noisy environments limit progress in reading and writing
- Literature is probably the most powerful medium that children have
- All class books need to be diverse and provide children with opportunities to imagine themselves in the story or with an ability to access the experiences
- Children need to learn about the lives that are different from their own in order to breakdown prejudices and division
- Children thrive on repetition and should be encouraged to listen / read the same story repeatedly
- Reading aloud takes preparation and practice so book should not be read cold. Read beforehand and consider voice(s); pauses; memorable words and phrases; word meanings; asides
- Teachers need to express positivity and excitement when reading a book
- 1st reading with no questions, explanations or predictions
- Subsequent readings with voices, actions, role play etc.
- Well chosen books in book corners not decoration – mini library that only displays books that have already been read aloud to children
- Encourage families to read to children at home
- Time for daily poetry and rhymes

Section 3: Word reading and spelling

- To be successful teachers and Tas need to understand the principles of decoding and encoding (word reading and spelling)

- Teachers and TAs need to know all the terminology and word origins including the alphabetic code
- Synthetic phonics – sounds that combine the skill of segmenting words into their individual sounds in order to spell
- Decoding and encoding are reversible processes – reading involves blending; spelling involves segmenting
- Children learn to read more quickly than they learn to spell – reading must not be held back for this reason
- Children should not be asked to learn lists of high frequency words
- Do not mix materials from different programmes – it confuses children
- Invest in books that are carefully structured in accordance with phonic knowledge and do not expect children to use other strategies to work out words
- Daily phonics as soon as children start reception – 10 mins long in the first instance but by the summer term reception children should be having 1 hour each day
- 1 to 1 or small group catch-up for those pupils who need extra help as same day interventions
- Reading – children should revise previous GPCs, be taught new GPC, practise reading words containing already taught GPCs and practise reading texts that match the already taught GPCs and CEW (common exception words)
- Writing – practise segmenting and choosing letters to represent each sound, correct pencil grip, start and exit point not lead-ins, dictation exercises using only the GPCs and CEW they already know
- Dictation is vital in all phonics sessions
- Handwriting – correct formation / size / orientation should come before attempting joined. This must be practised every day in EYFS and Year 1
- Composition develops at a slower pace to that of reading
- Before composition children need to know:- what they want to say, identify sounds in words, at least 1 way to spell each sound and how to form letters correctly
- The expectation of early writing at length leads to cognitive overload. Extra time for writing is unnecessary
- Books should match the order of the GPCs and should be decodable
- Children in EYFS and Year 1 should only have phonetically decodable books and not the ‘normal’ reading stage books
- Activities such as painting, colouring, sand / water play are valuable for language development / knowledge / cooperative play but not for practising phonics (e.g. fishing for words in a water tray, painting or making models of letters does not provide sufficient or high quality practice)
- Mini-whiteboards do not help children learn to develop their pencil grips or form letters correctly
- Children should sit at a table for phonics sessions and not on the carpet so that they can write clearly
- Literacy is important to children with moderate to severe SEND and most are in specialist provision
- SEND children have to navigate the written language, alphabetic code, learn the same skills and remember the same body of knowledge as their non-SEN peers
- SSP is appropriate and effective for children with autism
- As children gain fluency their motivation increases
- Children need to become fluent within their age appropriate GPCs before attempting anything within the next stage
- 1 to 1 reading should only involve books closely matched to the child’s GPC knowledge

Assessment

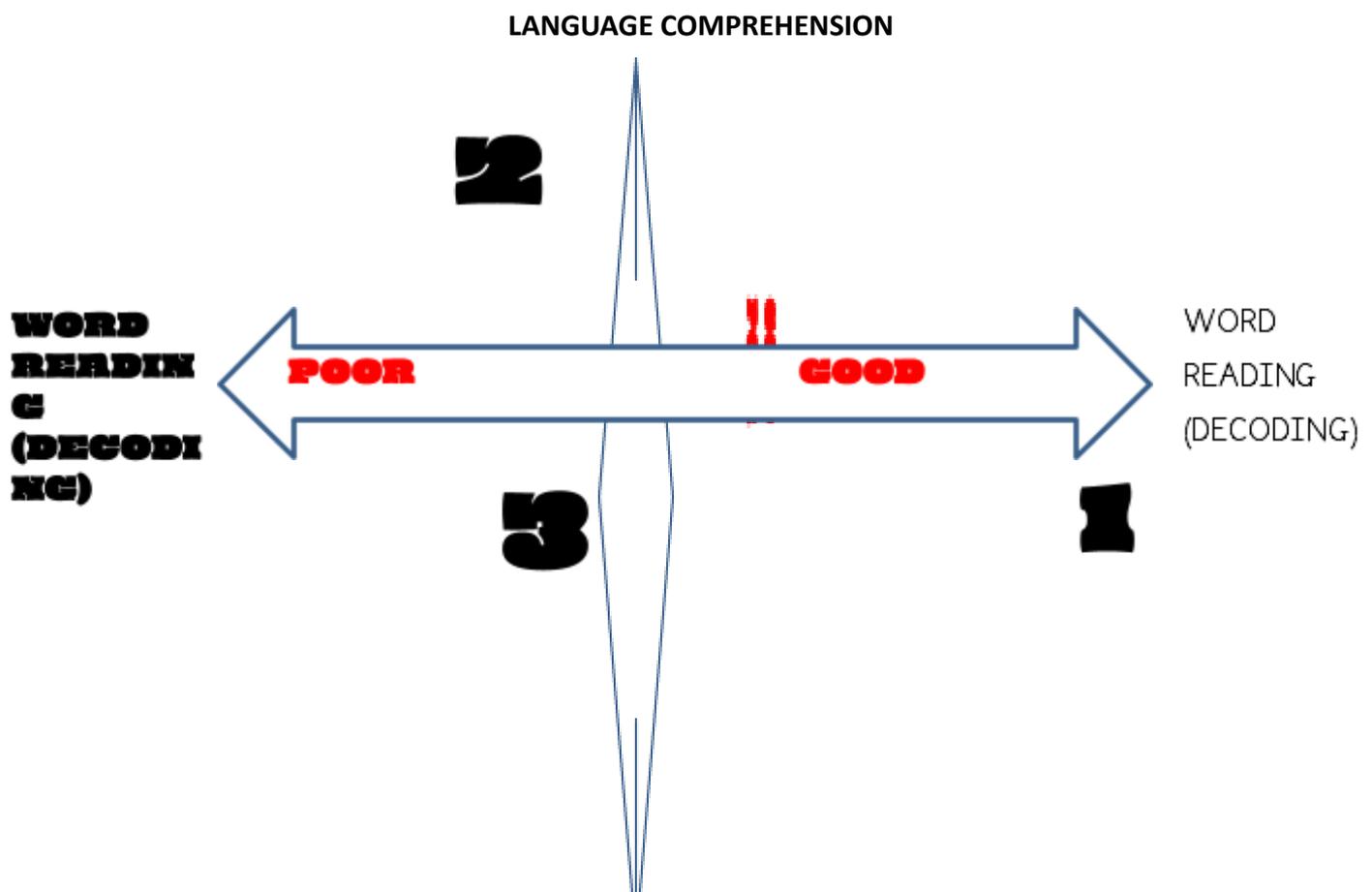
- Close and regular assessment is essential

- Adjust teaching, review a GPC, repeat steps to support blending, keeping children on task is formative assessment
- Summative assessment is all about information for teachers and for leaders
- It is important that leaders act upon all assessment information and support teachers to improve outcomes
- Summative assessments at least termly
- Individual records of progress not group are vital
- The phonics screening check for Year 1 is a light touch assessment – 5 minutes per child with 20 real and 20 pseudo words
- Year 1 children who do not meet standards should be re-screened in Year 2
- To assess reading comprehension use only decodable books until a child can read fluently (at a glance)
- It is not desirable to assess reading comprehension using a summative assessment before they are reading fluently

Section 4: Children at risk of reading failure

- Essential that there is sufficient teaching time for all the statutory content
- Some children will need extra support from the start – use assessment to identify
- Give extra practice either 1 to 1 or small group every day
- Children only to read decodable books containing GPCs that have been explicitly taught
- Older children including late arrival and EAL will need intensive 1 to 1 or small group sessions
- Every child needs to master the alphabetic code
- School leaders and SENCOs must take responsibility for making sure all pupils make rapid progress

Simple view of reading



LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

1. Represents good word reading but poor comprehension – children with SLCN and EAL needs may fall into this category
 2. Good understanding but poor decoding – they need SSP but also need to hear / talk about books appropriate to their age every day
 3. Poor language comprehension and poor decoding – extra phonics and reading daily
- Assess older pupils using school's phonics programme who are either 1, 2 or 3 but they do not need something different from others who are learning to read
 - Catch-up provision should be age appropriate rather than simply using materials intended (designed) for younger children
 - Training, support and coaching for Tas is essential

Section 5: Leadership and Management

- Headteachers are ultimately responsible for building the reading culture in their school
- Teachers are responsible for demonstrating their understanding of SSP
- EYFS and Year 1 should include daily – story time; poetry / singing time and 1 or more phonics sessions
- Headteachers and leaders must ensure that the teaching of reading is effective and a SSP programme is implemented
- Training including retraining and support of teachers and Tas is essential
- All schools should have a literacy lead who becomes an expert in the chosen phonics programme
- An agreement between the headteacher and literacy lead has to include:- details of the role, expectations and assessment progress for each year group, timetables for phonics, reading and writing sessions and story times, organisation of teaching spaces and resources, extra practice for children who need it, timetable for practice and coaching of staff, systems for staff cover, support for parents
- A programme of in-school deliberate practice of teaching routines to build consistency and accountability and to ensure that everyone is teaching reading in the same way
- Literacy lead should be coaching teachers and Tas who have children who need the most support
- A team of 'expert' teachers (usually literacy lead, EYFS and KS1 phase leaders, SENCO and/or EAL lead) should meet regularly ideally weekly

Section 6: Building on the foundations with older pupils

- The foundations of reading and writing should be secure
- Strong start in EYFS and Year 1 essential
- All pupils should read often in all lessons
- An effective and rigorous spelling programme is essential because encoding is more difficult than decoding due to the different correspondences for the same sound
- Only join handwriting when printed letters are formed correctly and easily
- Grammar and punctuation becomes essential in the teaching of writing