Rationale for teaching phonics and word recognition at Curnow School.

School Context

Curnow school is a 2-19 specialist provision for students with special educational needs. We have two learning pathways within school. Our curriculum is divided in to the Learning to Learn and Ready to Learn strands, the EYFS curriculum and the Post 16 curriculum. Our Learning to Learn pupils are assessed using annual EHCP outcomes broken down into termly targets. The engagement model looks at how the children learn. Our ready to learn pupils follow a curriculum based on the national curriculum, split into the core subjects (including English), the creative curriculum and understanding the world. At Curnow we are proud of the levels of engagement in the classroom which is supported by teacher's knowledge of how to plan a highly individualised timetable which takes into account pupil's interests and learning styles.

Intent

We aim to support our learners to become as independent readers and writers as they are able. To achieve this we equip our young people with a range of decoding and sight word recognition skills, supporting them to decipher the written word. This will begin with a focus on sound discrimination, understanding pattern and oral motor skills where appropriate, whilst developing their skills to attend and learn. As our young people progress through the school we prepare our young people to access the written world in the wider world to foster their independence skills. This may include the introduction of social sight and functional vocabulary recognition where appropriate. In addition we work hard to foster a love of literature in its many forms.

Implementation

The Education Endowment Foundation states *'Phonics has a positive impact overall (+5 months) with very extensive evidence and is an important component in the development of early reading skills, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The teaching of phonics should be explicit and systematic to support children in making connections between the sound patterns they hear in words and the way that these words are written. The teaching of phonics should be matched to children's current level of skill in terms of their phonemic awareness and their knowledge of letter sounds and patterns (graphemes)'.*

Using the evidence based practice outlined in Comprehensive Literacy for All, Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write, (Karen A Ericson and David A Koppenhaver), students within the Ready to Learn strand are assessed as emergent or conventional literacy leaners. Students in the Learning to Learn strand are mainly termed Sensory phonic learners.

The following table outlines the criteria for each strand along with an overview of the school offer.

Curnow School Phonics Offer Overview

Sensory	Emergent	Conventional
Phase 1 phonics daily. Aspects 1-7 1. Environmental sounds 2. Instrumental sounds 3. Body percussion 4. Rhythm and Rhyme 5. Alliteration 6. Voice sounds 7. Oral blending and segmenting	Letter of the day - This will include – Letter sound Letter name Writing the letter Modelled segmenting and blending Develop communication offer so that the following criteria can be met – Students must have a method of communication and interaction.	Students in this strand will access formal phonics through the 'Phonics for Pupils with Special Educational Needs' scheme and will have a reading book linked to the letter/sound that they are learning. Some students will receive instruction in comprehension where they read fluently but lack understanding of text.
Learners move to the emergent strand when – They are secure in most aspects as identified by the phase 1 assessment tracker and the teacher judgement.	Learners move to the conventional strand when – They know SATPIN most of the time They are able to attend to the presented activities They have a 'solid' and consistent method of communication They show a clear understanding that writing/reading involves letters and words They engage actively in shared reading.	We have a small number of students that we term Conventional +. These students read fluently but lack comprehension and application skills. They will be working on elements of the reading rope to support their development as skilled readers.

Sensory - The teaching of phonics begins with pre formal phonics skills taught following the letters and sounds phases. The EHCP and therapy goals are used to guide target setting where appropriate and teachers use ongoing assessment to guide target changes.

Emergent - The emergent learner's access teaching of a daily letter sound and teacher assessment takes place each half term to determine if students are ready to access Phonics for Pupils with SEN (PPSEN), our formal phonics scheme. Alongside the daily letter students continue to access instruction aimed at teaching and consolidating the letters and sounds phases throughout the school day, woven through the wider curriculum. In addition teachers model simple blending and segmenting and demonstrate use of the materials developed to support pre-verbal learners, teaching and modelling their use to support skill fluency before this is used within the formal phonics scheme. This forms the 'letters and sounds' instruction for emergent learners.

Conventional - Conventional leaners will be taught through the use of Phonics for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (PPSEN) which is a complete, structured, multisensory programme for teaching reading and spelling and includes activities to develop auditory and visual perceptual skills. It uses methods that support teaching pre-verbal students effectively. This forms the 'working with words' instruction for conventional learners.

Presently (Autumn 2 2023) across the school the percentages across the literacy strands are as follows (numbers in bracket show previous number recorded Autumn 1).

Sensory Strand – 39 students (40)
Emergent strand – 44 students (50)
Conventional strand – 18 Students (11)
Conventional + (readers working on other elements of the reading rope) 3

Comprehensive Literacy for ALL Students

Emergent Readers and Writers

Shared Reading

Letters and Sounds

Literacy & Language

Shared Writing

Independent Reading

Independent Writing

Conventional Readers and Writers

Guided Reading

Working with Words

Literacy & Language

Self-Selected Reading

Independent Writing

Planned phonics instruction takes place from EYFS and through to the end of key stage 4, if our learners are still making progress within the phonics scheme this will continue to be taught through to the end of schooling or to a point agreed by the teacher and the English lead. This holds with our ethos that the only thing guaranteed is that 'a student will not learn what is not taught'.

During phonics sessions students learn how to write upper and lower case letters and to support their handwriting development the Read Write Inc rhymes are used. For those who do not use conventional handwriting methods the use of 'alternative tools' such as keyboards or letter shapes is encouraged.

PLAYDOUGH STAMPERS.

WOODEN LETTER DISCS

For students who do not respond to phonetic approaches to reading we use whole word approaches such as See and Learn and individual word banks to support learning alongside the letter of the day daily instruction. In addition we

have a number of students who are technically fluent readers but who have limited comprehension skills. The priority for these students will be comprehension and their offer will be informed by the reading rope.
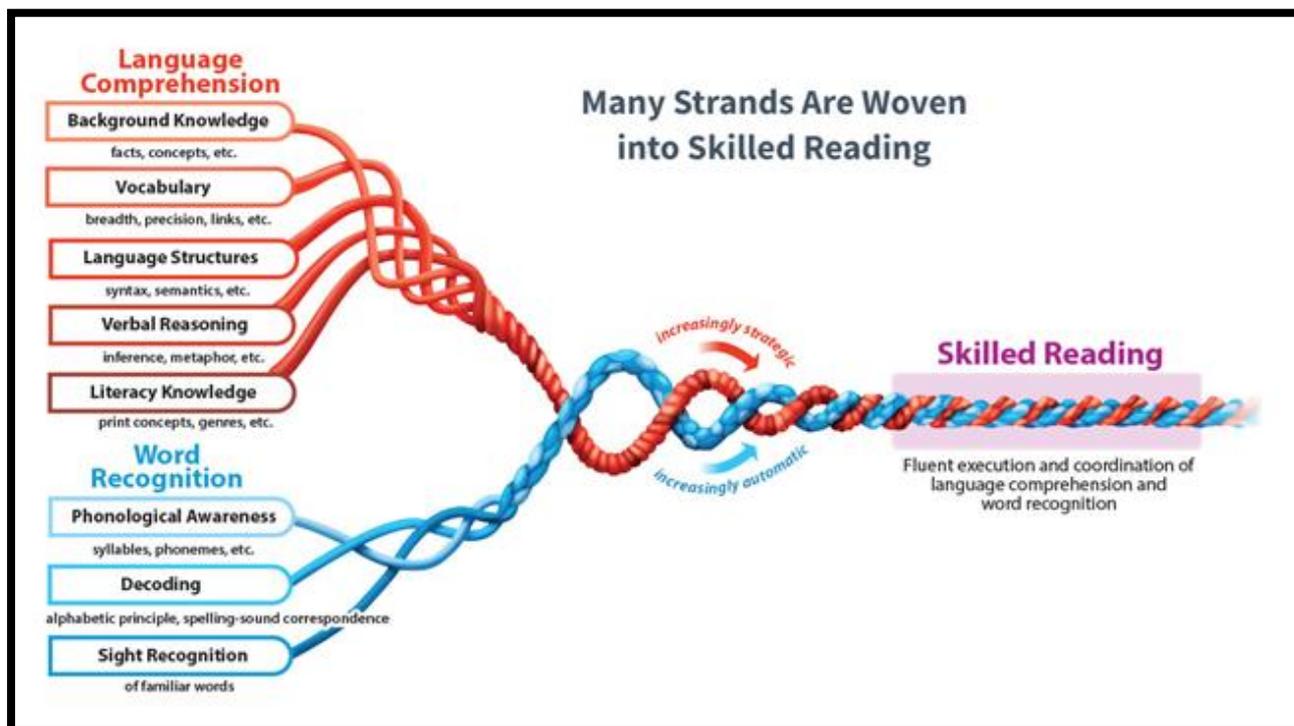
Our reading schemes support the teaching of phonics as they are used to supplement learning in formal phonics sessions. The use of these reading schemes directly linking to the letters/sounds being taught at that time further support the learning. We use a range of schemes that are organised to allow teachers and students to select books that provide both interest and opportunities to develop phonic knowledge. We are also developing our own library of books sing Tar Heel Reader Students also choose books from our libraries to develop interests in books and support understanding of a range of texts.

Regular staff training and lesson observations/learning walks support us to ensure consistent and high quality teaching and to address any inconsistencies early by providing extra support and guidance.
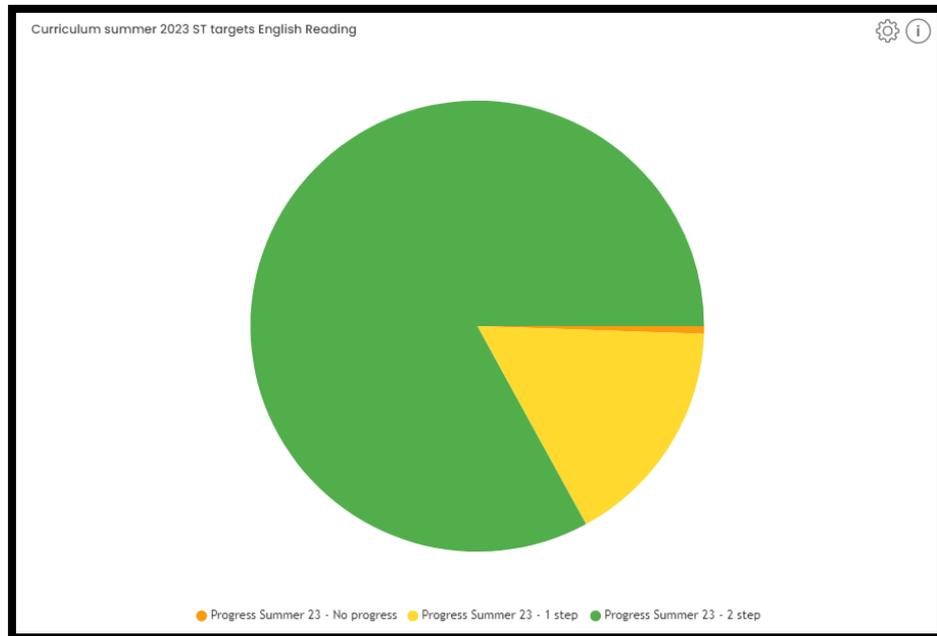
"We do not believe that a different curriculum is required in order for children with disabilities to succeed in learning to read and write. We have learned, however, that teachers must attend consciously and thoughtfully to the significant learning differences of children with disabilities in order to make good instruction accessible to these students."
–Karen Erickson and David Koppenhaver from Children With Disabilities: Reading and Writing the Four Blocks Way

Impact - Assessment of outcomes

Evidence for learning is used to track progress in reading against the reading framework written by the Special Partnership Trust working party. In addition half termly checks are undertaken to check progress in phonics. Teachers meet with the English lead to discuss any students who are not reaching the expected standards in any area of the curriculum and this forms the basis of an action plan to address any areas of concern.

By the end of the summer term 2023 our data shows us that
82% of targets set were **established**, 17% of targets were **developing** and 1% were **emerging**. On average 3 reading targets were set for each student using the SPT framework, these worked toward a longer term goal. Teachers are able to clearly articulate the setting of targets and the progress made for each student.

Curriculum summer 2023 ST targets English Reading

● Progress Summer 23 - No progress ● Progress Summer 23 - 1 step ● Progress Summer 23 - 2 step

Emerging	Not present or only beginning to emerge. High level of prompt or support.
Developing	Evidence of progress. Lower level of prompt or support.
Established	Is used frequently and maintained over time. Mostly independent/spontaneous, only occasional reminders.
Generalised	Consistently used and applied within a range of settings/contexts and with a range of people. Independent and unprompted.

We continue to be ambitious in our offer, challenging any preconceptions and continuing to follow a research led approach to develop the best practice for our learners.