



Early Reading and Phonics Policy

January 2024

Definitions

The purpose of this section is to outline key definitions that will be covered in this policy.

Early readers – students who are gradually acquiring the skills of literacy but cannot yet read independently. Early readers have been assessed using a SSP assessment (see below).

SSP – Systematic synthetic phonics refers to a structured phonics programme that is proven to develop essential reading skills in children. Each part of the programme is matched to a student's phonic ability and is built upon.

TPG - 'Through the phonics gateway' refers to students who have progressed through the early stages of phonics and are therefore no longer referred to as an 'early reader.'

RWI – 'Read, Write Inc. Phonics Programme' - this is the phonics programme used at Brook Green Centre for Learning

'Spotlight students' - a student that has been highlighted as requiring differentiated support to progress.

Our rationale

At Brook Green Centre for Learning we believe that reading is the gateway to all learning. Success in reading is essential to develop our students' self-confidence and motivation to learn. We know that the sooner young people learn to read, the more success they will have at school. We aim to create a supportive environment which encourages a love of reading and develops core phonics skills enabling students to reach their potential in reading. We will support staff to feel confident in delivering an exciting and enriching curriculum which inspires our students and builds on their core skills. We are passionate about being a school with reading at our heart.

Our core aims as a reading school are to:

- Involve all staff, students, and the community in promoting a reading culture.
- Raise and maintain standards of reading throughout the school.
- Enable students to access all subjects.
- Give students the skills needed to thrive in the wider world.

Our non-negotiables are:

1. Every child will be a reader.
2. All staff will know who our early readers are and their most recent reading ages.
3. All staff will be trained in the *Read, Write, Inc Phonics programme* and how to use phonics across the curriculum.
4. All early readers will have the opportunity to practice their reading every day.

5. All early readers will have daily phonics practice.
6. All 'Through the Phonics Gateway' (TPG) students will be using an accelerated reader scheme to promote independent reading.
7. All TPG students will be heard read once weekly as a minimum.
8. All students will have the opportunity to read a book matched to their independent reading ability.
9. The progress of all students will be regularly and consistently monitored by reading leaders and the English team with support in place for those who are not making expected progress.

What is our Phonics Programme for Early Readers?

We use a programme called *Read Write Inc. Phonics* to teach our students to read and write. We make sure *every* child can read the last set of phonic stories before they progress to our higher-level programmes. Students are supported at each stage to make progress through the programme. Those students who need extra support will be highlighted as our 'spotlight students' at each 6-week assessment.

Each *Read Write Inc* session will be for 45 minutes each day. Students will be grouped by their reading progress and re-assessed each half term to place them in a group where they will make the most progress. We will provide extra daily one-to-one sessions accordingly to those who need a bit of a boost to keep up.

Overview of Read Write Inc.

Read Write Inc. Phonics depends upon our students learning to read and write sounds effortlessly, so we make it simple and fun. The phonic knowledge is split into two parts.

First, we teach them one way to read and write the 40+ sounds in English. We use pictures to help, for example we make 'a' into the shape of an apple, 'f' into the shape of a flower. These pictures help *all* children, especially slower starters, to read the sounds easily. Children learn to read words by sound-blending using a frog called Fred. Fred says the sounds and children help him blend the sounds to read each word.

Then we teach our students the different spellings of the same sounds, for example, they learn that the sound 'ay' is written ay, a-e and ai; the sound 'ee' is written ee, e and ea. We use phrases to help them remember each sound for example, ay - may I play, a-e – make a cake?

Once we are confident that the student can decode words, we move onto story books. The first thing we do is, give children books we *know* they can read – without any guessing. Before they read the story, they sound out the names of characters and new words, practise reading any of the 'tricky Red' words, and we tell them a thought-provoking introduction to get them excited about the story. Then, over three days, children read the

story three times: first to focus on reading the words carefully; the second to help them read the story fluently; and on the third, we talk about the story together for example, how characters might be feeling and why. By the time children read the story at home, they will be able to read it confidently with expression.

Outcomes for students

Assessing and tracking progress

We assess all students at the start of year 7 using Read Write Inc and Toe by Toe reading assessments. This lets us know every students' starting point. The Read Write Inc.

Programme looks at early phonics, whereas the Toe-by-Toe assessment looks specifically at a reading age.

For those identified as early readers, the Read Write Inc. Programme will be provided. We start by recording their starting point, as well as their current progress. Current progress is provided using the RWI online assessment every half-term. We use this data to identify those who need our help to 'keep up not catch up.'

Impact across the curriculum

Our teaching staff understand that reading is the gateway to all learning, not just in English. We apply the data from the Read Write Inc Assessments and Toe by Toe to all subjects. Using this data, we can accurately tell who needs the most support and adapt our teaching approach accordingly to meet our students' needs. This could be reading to a student aloud, tailoring language or modelling spellings using phonics.

Reading at home

At Brook Green Centre for Learning students are encouraged to make reading part of daily life.

As part of the Read Write Inc programme, students will bring home a book that can be shared with parents/carers.

Parents/carers are made aware of the benefits of reading at home to support early reading as well as reading for pleasure. We support parents/carers with reading at home by hosting regular drop ins throughout the school year.

Quality of teaching and students' progress

The Headteacher and Reading Leaders monitor students' progress together – and subsequently share this with the entire team. Those students who are making slower progress students are highlighted as 'spotlight students'.

Lessons and sessions will be regularly observed, and individual feedback will be provided. We also ensure that our staff have access to high quality coaching and training to ensure skills are maintained.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Shared vision

The school's shared vision is that every student learns to read quickly and continues to read widely and often. The Headteacher works with all staff to ensure that this happens. In particular, she works closely with the reading leaders and HLTA for Literacy. The Headteacher, working with the leadership team, monitors the quality of teaching and ensures coaching is provided for staff (teachers and teaching assistants).

The role of the reading leaders is critical. Alongside the Headteacher, the reading leaders drive the teaching of *Read, Write, Inc.* Phonics. The reading leaders' roles include:

- Ensuring that our teaching of reading is of the highest quality and that all students make progress.
- Ensuring our early readers make good progress and organising one-to-one tutoring for students who need extra reading support.
- Grouping students for some activities, including phonics, i.e. at the same reading level.
- Providing further training (e.g. master classes, coaching/observation, and face-to-face feedback).
- Monitoring of student progress

Parents and carers

We take every opportunity to make parents aware of how we teach phonics and early Reading through our website, at our Annual Reviews of EHCPs, at parental events and at parents' evenings.

Equal opportunities

We will ensure that all students have equal access to the curriculum, regardless of their SEN need, gender, or race. Students with specific reading needs (such as students with visual impairments and speech and language needs) are supported through intervention packages in school and appropriate resources. The books which our children read will be chosen carefully so that issues related to equal opportunities are handled sensitively. The interests and needs of individual students will be taken into consideration when reading activities and materials are selected. We will ensure that the books and literature available to students represent as wide a range of cultures and life experiences as possible. We believe that books should hold up a mirror to our students and be a window to the world.

Person responsible for this policy: Sarah Holt

Next review: January 2025