

RWI Phonics Meeting 24.01.13

Questions and Answers

Q. As Read, Write Inc. is new, how would it affect students who have been taught a different method and are in other year groups?

A. As phonics has always been taught at Alderley Edge CP School, the change in programme should not impact on children in a negative way. The changes are simply to the way in which phonics is **delivered**. The aspects of phonics are the same whichever programme is used to teach. For example, blending to read and segmenting to write would have taken place in previous phonics sessions. Read, Write Inc. just ensures that it takes place systematically and with consistency across the school.

Q. How are children actually assessed? What test is used?

Children are assessed using the Read, Write Inc. assessments. This assessment checks children's ability to both identify sounds, and use them correctly to blend. It also assesses the ease at which children can blend, and their ability to read words from sight. The assessment allows us to group children in the correct ability group and gives specific and direct guidance on what children need to learn next. This enables children to both cement previous knowledge and make progress through the programme.

Q. In the spelling books do we need to ask our children to write examples of the words to demonstrate the spelling or will verbal practising do?

As demonstrated at the parents meeting, the children will use a strategy called "Fred Fingers" to help to physically spell out words before writing them down. It would be best to use this strategy at home, for children to "stamp on" the sounds to their fingers, as well as writing the sounds down when practising spellings.

Q. Does age difference make a difference to the stage children are at in learning phonics?

Naturally, age can give older children an advantage as they will have been exposed to phonics for a longer period of time. However the programme works to ensure children are grouped according to what they need to learn next, rather than limit them according their age. Maturity and ability to learn at a particular pace can sometimes come into play when grouping children. As the groups are small we are able to carefully monitor children's progress and confidence within their group. If children find the pace difficult, or too easy, children will be moved into a group that is more suited to both their ability and maturity level.

Q. Are the children still being taught cursive writing? The letters on the resource cards show non-cursive writing.

Children in Year groups 1 - 6 will continue to handwrite in cursive writing. Children in Reception will learn in print in the initial stages. Handwriting will be taught separately from the phonics session, and the phrases used alongside letters are purely to help children memorise how letters look in the initial stages of the programme (usually in the Autumn term of the Reception Year). Phonics sessions will focus on children's ability to recognise sounds and use them correctly to blend and segment (read and write words).

Q. If older siblings have been taught by a different methodology how would you suggest they support younger siblings? How can I encourage them to be inclusive?

As mentioned in the first question the basics of phonics remain the same in every programme taught. It may be an idea to get younger siblings to teach older siblings the things they have learnt in their phonics lessons! It would be good revision for younger children and will help to educate the whole family!

Q. Will the teaching of blending not confuse children when they come to a word they cannot blend?

Unfortunately, the English language is extremely complicated! The teaching of phonics allows children to employ a strategy to at least attempt to read and write most words. Children will learn to blend 'green words' (word that are phonetically decodable) and also learn that 'red words' (words that are not phonetically decodable) must be read from sight. This is taught through the programme. As children become more exposed to 'red words' through their reading books, they often remember to read them from sight.

Q. What is a 'pure sound'? How can I make sure I say the sounds correctly to my child?

We teach children 'pure sounds' during phonics. This is the sound that letters make in a word. We try to keep these sounds as short as possible to make it easier for children to blend them together. It is often tempting to put an "uh" sound of the end; for example saying "muh" instead of "mmm" for the letter "m". If you are unsure how to make the sounds you can follow this link to practise.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J2Ddf_0Om8

More often than not - your child will let you know if you are saying it wrong!

Q. What do I do if my child always talks in 'Fred Talk' and constantly blends?

If your child talks in 'Fred Talk' a lot of the time, then don't worry, this is a great sign! The most important part of learning to read and write is being able to 'Fred Talk'! This means that they have a secure strategy for reading and writing. Over time the novelty will wear off and as they continue through the programme children will begin to 'speedy read' (read from sight). It is important that children always have 'Fred Talk' to have as a strategy to fall back on when being introduced to more complex sounds, so please always encourage this process.