



# Peak School Reading Policy

## **Our Reading Policy aims to:**

- Foster a love of reading by equipping pupils with the skills necessary to access a wide range of texts.
- Ensure pre-phonics activities lay the foundation for phonics instruction by helping children and young people develop the auditory, oral language and cognitive skills necessary for decoding words.
- Develop strong foundational phonic skills in all pupils, enabling them to decode words accurately and fluently.
- Ensure that phonics instruction is systematic, structured and multisensory.
- Provide a consistent and cohesive approach to phonics and fluency instruction throughout the school.
- Monitor and assess the progress of each pupil to tailor instruction to their individual needs.

## **What is reading?**

Many of us will think of reading as picking up a story or information book and following the words to the end or selecting sections of interest to read. As such, a large proportion of us will not think of ourselves as readers. We must remember that books in the traditional form are only one type of media that humans read. In today's technology-rich world, we read visual images on the television, in films and in magazines, in picture books, or through texts and social media with GIF images and emojis. We read audio information through audiobooks and podcasts, radio and voice messages and we read print through websites and e-books or e-mags, social media and text messages in addition to traditional books, newspapers and print.

To read, we need two broad key skills: the ability to interpret sensory codes to create meaning (known as decoding) and the ability to attach full meaning to the codes interpreted (comprehension). In order to be active participants in society, the ability to decode and comprehend the written word is key.

## **Why is reading so important?**

So, reading is important. A 2015 study commissioned by The Reading Agency found numerous positive outcomes on children and young people, including developed knowledge of the self and others, positive social interactions, improved understanding of the world around them and overall wellbeing and mood regulation improvements. (The Reading Agency - 2015) Likewise, reading can be seen as a gateway to accessing other subjects as we need to have the key skills for reading in order to take on information about the world

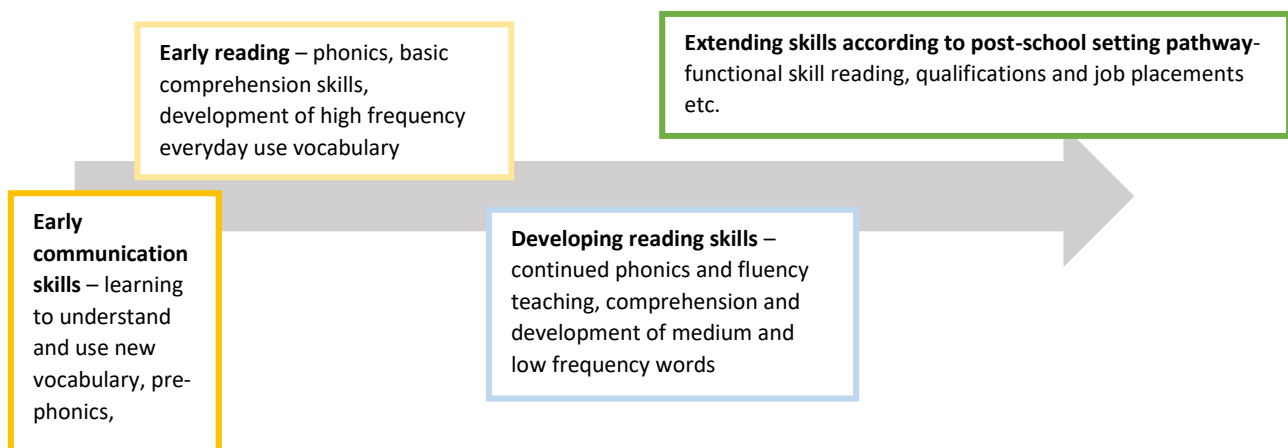
around us from a range of media. It is therefore important for all young people to be offered the opportunity to learn these key skills and develop a motivation for reading as a priority.

### **What will reading development look like?**

The teaching of reading can be divided into two broad areas:

- 1) Direct reading instruction – skills taught directly to students;
- 2) Reading motivation – students want to read freely and in their own time.

The direct reading instruction journey will look the same for every child. What children and young people learn in terms of skills will not change according to need. How these skills are taught and the speed of progression **will** vary according to individual needs and motivators.



### **Early Reading Instruction – Pre-Phonics**

Pupils benefit from a literacy rich environment which offers opportunities for expressive and receptive communication, building attention and engagement through developmentally appropriate learning which is purposeful and meaningful. (Neaum 2017)

All classes ensure they are communication friendly and enhance the early literacy and literacy development of all pupils. In our class environments and routines, pupils are exposed to print in meaningful ways including: labelling in the classroom, coat pegs/lockers, register, snack time and daily timetables. Each classroom has a reading area which encourages engagement with stories and books from the earliest stage.

Neaum (2017) outlines the knowledge and skills required to create a framework for the essential learning that comes before phonics which includes:

- Spoken language: the basis of becoming literate
- Physical activity that supports sensory awareness and integration
- Meta-linguistic awareness
- An understanding of the functions and forms of print
- The ability to symbolise
- Phonological awareness

### **Speaking and Listening (Communication)**

The ability to communicate and listen underpins all learning. All pupils need the opportunity to learn language, to hear, use and practice it in a variety of forms and situations. Key features of interaction and communication that best support pupils learning in language rich environment include:

Playfulness- where the adult is lively and enthusiastic in their interactions and both are enjoying the interaction.

Commentary- where the adult talks about the activity or experience as it is happening and pupils hear the language that is used to mediate their learning experience. This can be seen in Attention Autism (Davies 2013).

Teachable moments- where the adult seizes an opportune moment to move the pupil's learning forward, these can be used to specifically teach vocabulary or the articulation of sounds.

Scaffolding or extending talk- where using interactions that encourage engagement in communication offer opportunities for the pupils to hear and respond allowing them to engage in the interaction. This may take the form of Intensive Interaction (Hewett 2021)

### **Physical Foundations of Literacy**

Physical development is integral to learning. Ensuring activities stimulate and engage pupils' senses help them build on what they know and can do. This provides the opportunities for pedagogical interactions to enable them to explore, investigate, observe, imitate, respond and apply their learning. Neaum (2017) states that the development of balance, proprioception, cross laterality and sensory awareness and integration are literacy, therefore this is reflected in our provision for early literacy to enable progression towards more formal learning. Classes are supported by an Occupational Therapist to ensure

that pupils are supported to develop sensory awareness and sensory integration specific to class and individual need.

### **Metalinguistic Development**

To develop the ability to think and talk about language all pupils start with developing their functional use of language and communication, leading to metalinguistic awareness. This is the next step of development and leads pupils to understand that language consists of words which carry meaning. The development of pupils' metalinguistic awareness is supported through interaction, storybooks and language play.

Interaction- modelling social interactions, blending and segmenting words, pointing out print and symbols in the environment.

Story books- sharing, reading and talking about stories, using sensory stories, repetitive stories.

Language play- rhymes, alliteration, onomatopoeic language, riddles.

### **Print Awareness**

Pupils become aware that print carries meaning as they see it in every day settings. All symbols used in school have the written word underneath the symbols and where possible all pictures are also accompanied by the written word.

Reading books to pupils contributes to their awareness of print and enriches the learning experiences of pupils. They also experience print in their environment such as labels, logos, books, magazines and packaging. Print in the digital environment also adds to their literacy learning through recognition of symbols/ icons for apps and programs.

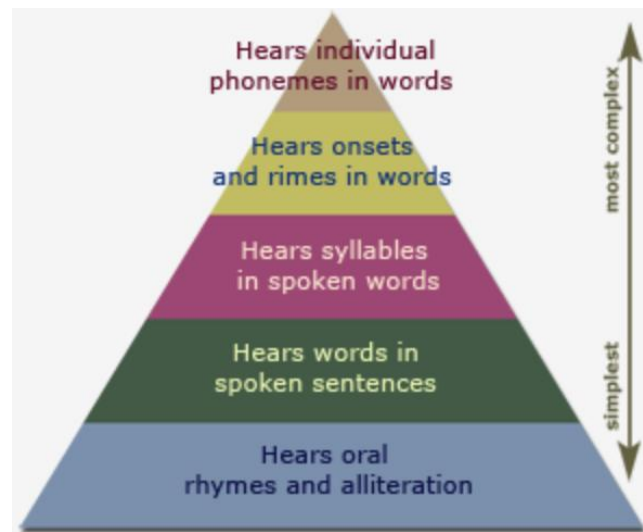
### **Symbolising and Representation**

In anticipation of becoming literate children learn how to recognise symbolic representation. Pupils develop an awareness of first order symbolism through symbolic systems including signing (Makaton) and symbols (Widgit) which builds their understanding of visual representation. This lays the foundations for second order symbolism specific to phonics.

### **Phonological Awareness**

Phonological awareness paves the way into formal phonic teaching and learning. Phonemic awareness relates only to sounds and is a precursor to

phonics. Phonological awareness follows a sequential development pattern outlined by Smith (2017).



Smith (2017)

### **Phonics Implementation – Jolly Phonics**

We have chosen to adopt the Jolly Phonics program as our primary phonics instructional approach. Jolly Phonics is a research-based, multi-sensory program that teaches phonics through songs, actions and activities. This program includes the following key elements:

- Letter Sounds: Pupils learn the 42 letter sounds of the English language through fun actions and memorable songs
- Blending and segmenting: Pupils practise blending sounds to read words and segmenting words into sounds for spelling
- Tricky Words: Tricky words are taught as sight words to improve fluency.
- Decodable Reading Books: We use decodable reading books that align with the Jolly Phonics programme, allowing pupils to apply their phonic skills in reading

### **Phonics Instructional Sequence**

Phonics instruction follows a systematic and progressive sequence, introducing new phonemes and graphemes in a logical order. Our phonics instruction is structured to ensure that pupils build upon their prior knowledge as they progress through the program.

### **Daily Phonics Sessions**

Phonics instruction is an integral part of our daily curriculum. Each class incorporates dedicated phonics sessions to provide regular and consistent

practice. These sessions are interactive, engaging and tailored to the specific needs of the pupils.

### **Assessment and Tracking**

We regularly assess pupils' phonic skills to monitor their progress. Assessment tools may include phonic assessments, observations and reading fluency checks. This data helps us to identify pupils who may need additional support and allows us to adjust our instruction accordingly.

### **Adaptive Strategies**

We recognize that pupils have varying levels of phonics proficiency. Teachers adapt instruction to provide targeted support for learners and challenge more advanced pupils. Small group activities and one on one interventions are employed when necessary.

### **Home School Partnerships**

We encourage parents and guardians to support phonics development at home by reading with their child, practising phonics sounds and reinforcing tricky word recognition.

### **Phonics in Context**

While phonics is a fundamental skill, we also emphasize the importance of applying phonics skills in real reading and writing contexts. Our curriculum integrates phonics in lessons so that reading is prioritised and pupils have opportunities to apply their skills.

### **CPD**

Our teachers receive ongoing training in Jolly Phonics and phonics instruction to ensure they are equipped with the latest research based strategies and techniques.

## **Developing Reading Skills**

### **Approaches to Developing Reading Skills Post-Phonics**

Pupils that are at the 'Developing Reading Skills' stage on the reading instruction journey, have regular reading sessions and instruction to develop their fluency and automaticity. We aim for all pupils to have fluent decoding skills, where pupils read accurately, at a suitable or functional speed without compromising their understanding of the text. We understand that once accuracy and automaticity in word reading is established, the brain's resources are then available to focus on comprehending the meaning of the words and text.

### **Fluency**

Fluency is practised during English lessons and phonic sessions. For pupils on the phonics programme, decodable texts are regularly used at a level where the words are easily accessible. When a pupil begins to move away from the phonics programme, age-appropriate texts written for developing readers are utilised. We understand the importance of pupils having access to texts that they enjoy and so work closely with the pupil to identify books of interest. Staff will use a range of techniques to develop fluency including echo and choral reading, teacher/teaching assistant modelling, repetition, paired and guided reading.

### **Vocabulary**

Developing vocabulary is important in every subject that is taught at Peak School. Teachers will introduce new vocabulary in a systematic way, ensuring that there are opportunities to repeat key words and terminology. Vocabulary is taught depending on the needs of the individual, with pupils learning high frequency and then subject specific vocabulary where appropriate. This stepped approach to vocabulary ensures that we are responding to the individual needs of each student.

### **Developing Higher Level Comprehension Skills**

Higher level comprehension skills are those which require a wider background knowledge and understanding of the world to enable a young person to interpret a text. The following key skills are taught in English lessons and are included in the 'higher-level' comprehension skills umbrella:

1. Background knowledge – knowledge of topics and themes
2. Vocabulary knowledge – understanding words
3. Understanding sentences – the way sentences are written and what this means, including punctuation
4. Understanding and using text structures – the way texts are arranged and what this means

5. Activating meaning – making links to known words and existing understanding
6. Making inferences – understanding things that are not necessarily written in the text.
7. Monitoring their own understanding – checking comprehension and self-help strategies to develop understanding.

## **Motivating Pupils to Read**

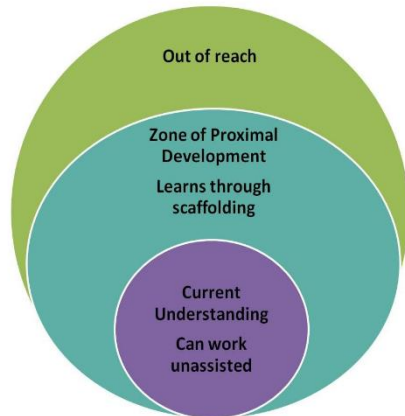
### **What is Reading Motivation?**

The desire to access reading material is essential in supporting reading skill instruction. As Teresa Cremin states, “the **will** to read influences the **skill**, and vice versa.” (Cremin 2023)

It is therefore essential that we develop and enhance opportunities for reading for pleasure and that we encourage those who may be reluctant to read to engage both at home and through the school day. Whilst modern technologies provide specific barriers to reading motivation (young people spend far longer online and using video games), we must also view this as an opportunity to widen the range of media available for reading for pleasure. For more information on Reading for Pleasure (RfP) as a teaching approach, visit the Open University’s website [Reading for Pleasure - Reading for Pleasure \(ourfp.org\)](http://ourfp.org).

An important aspect of Reading for Pleasure is allowing pupils the freedom to choose their reading material independent of their reading skill ability. Pupils may choose texts which are very easy to read, or they may decide to opt for more challenging texts which they are unable to decode independently but which they enjoy looking at (The Guinness Book of World Records is one such example!). The psychologist Vygotsky (1896-1934), introduced the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ model for education which can be used to illustrate this idea in the Reading for Pleasure context.

## Zone of Proximal Development



Vygotsky's model was intended to highlight the areas where learning takes place, in the central blue zone. Here, adult support is required for scaffolding learning and supporting students. The purple zone highlights areas of learning and skills where the student may feel comfortable and the top green zone shows areas that are out of reach for the student at that time. Many educational theorists have since used this model to highlight how young people may be taught by dipping into each of the areas to provide comfort, confidence and opportunities to remember learned information (purple zone), teaching new information (middle blue zone) and offering further challenge which may at first seem out of reach but supports the student in 'having a go' and taking risks (top green zone).

At Peak School we are keen to foster a love of reading and our students are regularly encouraged to engage with books and other reading material at their appropriate level. We know if we can encourage our students to read for pleasure or enjoy reading, they will reap the benefits. Research clearly shows that reading for pleasure can be directly linked to a wider access of the curriculum and greater independence into adulthood.

Reading for pleasure opens up new worlds. It gives students the opportunity to use their imagination, to explore new ideas, visit new places and meet new characters. Interestingly, reading for pleasure can also improve well-being and empathy which are keen values in our school. It helps them to understand their own identity and gives them an insight into the world and the views of others.

We aim for our reading for pleasure to be:

- Learner-led
- Informal
- Social and supported by
- Texts that tempt

### **Reading for Pleasure Strategies**

Reading for Pleasure is about allowing our children and young people the opportunities to read in the ways that they want to read. This could be through listening to audiobooks or accessing websites for information. Alternatively, it could be reading a sensory story to them. Every pupil in Peak and Mountains

Pathway, has a daily timetabled reading for pleasure slot where pupils are encouraged to read independently, read aloud, have stories or books read to them and participate in conversations about books. Each classroom has a 'book nook' or shelving where books and magazines are displayed. Pupils also have access to the school library. Post 16 pupils may also often go off site to visit local libraries where they can choose books that match their interests.

## References

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