



How we teach our pupils to read and write?

Every child deserves success right from the start. We know that the sooner pupils learn to read, the greater their success at school. This is why we put reading at the heart of what we do.

We use a teaching programme called Read Write Inc. Phonics to teach our pupils to read and write. Some pupils complete the programme in Year 1 and others in Year 2. Year 3 and 4 pupils who need extra support follow this programme too; struggling readers in Year 5 and 6 pupils follow a similar programme called Fresh Start.

We teach pupils individually or in small groups and reassess their phonic ability every half term and move on further along the programme as soon as needed. We provide extra daily one-to-one sessions for pupils who need a bit of a boost to keep up.

How do we make phonics easy for pupils to learn?

Read Write Inc. Phonics depends upon pupils learning to read and write sounds effortlessly, so we try to 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 pupils, especially slower-starters, to read the sounds easily.

Pupils learn to read words by sound-blending using a frog called Fred. Fred says the sounds and pupils help him blend the sounds to read each word.

Then we teach pupils 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?

How do we ensure pupils can read every book?

The first thing we do is to give pupils books we know they can read – without any guessing. (We read lots of other stories to them, but do not expect them to read these yet.)

Before they read the story, they sound out the names of characters and new words, practise reading any of the 'tricky red' words and tell them a thought-provoking introduction to get them excited about the story.

Then, over three days, pupils 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 your child reads the story to you at home, they will be able to read it confidently with expression.

How do we teach pupils to spell confidently?

We use just two simple activities: Fred Fingers to spell regular words and Red Rhythms for tricky words.

Fred Fingers

We teach pupils to spell using 'Fred Fingers': we say a word and then pupils pinch the sounds onto their fingers and write the word, sound by sound.

Red Rhythms

We teach tricky words with Red Rhythms. We say the tricky letters in a puzzled or annoyed voice and build the letter names up into a rhythm, for example, s-ai-d.

Pupils learn to spell new words and review past words every week, they practise spelling them and – when they're ready – we give them a test to celebrate their spelling success.

How do we make writing simple for pupils to learn?

We teach handwriting, spelling and composition separately, gradually bringing each skill together step-by-step.

We teach pupils to form letters with the correct pencil grip and in the correct sitting position from the very beginning. They practise handwriting every day so they learn to write quickly and easily.

Once pupils can write simple words, we teach them to 'hold' a sentence in their heads and then write it with correct spelling and punctuation.

Very soon pupils are able to write down their own ideas. We try out different sentences together, drawing on new vocabulary and phrases from the storybook they've just read. They practise saying their sentences out loud first so they don't forget their ideas while they're writing. They also learn to proofread their own writing using ready-made sentences containing common grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.

How can you help at home?

We appreciate you're busy but here are two things that will make the biggest difference to your child's progress. Every night:

1. Read a bedtime story to your child.

Your child will bring home lovely books from their class story corner. Read these stories to your child – don't ask them to read the story themselves as this is beyond their current reading stage. There is some really good advice about how to make bedtime storytime fun on www.ruthmiskin.com/parents

2. Listen to your child read the storybook we send home.

Your child will bring home a reading book at least once a week – and more if they request. Please do not say “This book is too easy!” Your child will have chosen their book to read for enjoyment. They’ll sometimes bring home previous books they have read too. Re-reading stories develops their fluency in every reading. There’s more good advice on how to listen to your child read on www.ruthmiskin.com/parents