**Doncaster School for the Deaf Reading Strategies**

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| **“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you’ll go.”— Dr. Seuss** |
| We believe that all Deaf children, regardless of their level of Deafness or preferred mode of communication, can learn to read written English just like their hearing peers. However, this may require bespoke strategies and interventions and at Doncaster School for the Deaf, we pride ourselves in being able to match each child we teach with the best approach for them. |
| **What is reading?** Reading involves two main strands – decoding or word recognition (learning to read individual words) and comprehension. Reading is a vital skill for several reasons. It is the key to unlocking the rest of the school curriculum; it is an important communication tool for Deaf people interacting in a hearing world and perhaps most importantly, it can inspire a love of books and reading for pleasure which lasts a lifetime.**What the best reading looks like:** The best reading is that which is fluent, confident and expressive. For our children with British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language, this may mean a smooth translation between the written English on the page and BSL, with facial expression, body language and other non-manual features used expertly to bring the story to life. For our children who communicate using speech or Sign Supported English (SSE), this will mean expressive intonation, an understanding of when to pause and using the correct sign for the words in the wider context of the sentences. **How do we achieve this?** One of the most effective ways of teaching early reading is through phonics. This means teaching the children how the sounds they hear are represented on the page and using this knowledge to help them ‘crack the code’ of written English. This of course presents challenges for Deaf children, however at Doncaster School for the Deaf we prefer to focus on what the children can do, rather than what they can’t. Phonics alone is not sufficient for teaching reading (EEF) – it has to be embedded in a rich environment of language and vocabulary so that the children can understand and make sense of what they read and this is what we aim to provide for our children. Some of our children, for example those who have good access to speech sounds through the use of hearing aid equipment, are able to access systematic phonics teaching with some additional support. Other children benefit from a different approach which may focus on learning to recognise whole words or learning to use morphology to grow the ‘bank’ of words they can read. Many of our children will use a combination of both approaches, whilst all the time being exposed to fluent and rich language models both in BSL and spoken English.We have devised pathways to help us decide which approach might work best for a particular child, however these are only a guide and each child is considered individually. (see appendix A - flowcharts). |
| **Reading curriculum and reading opportunities:***"I have a passion for teaching kids to become readers, to become comfortable with a book, not daunted. Books shouldn't be daunting, they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage." – Roald Dahl*Language and vocabulary are crucial to learning to read. Hearing children are learning to understand spoken language from birth and are already fluent in spoken English when they begin learning to read. Deaf children however, are likely to have missed out on a lot of this early language learning meaning that learning to read may seem like a difficult and daunting task. Therefore, we have devised a reading curriculum that draws on children’s strengths and uses the knowledge and expertise of our staff to ensure that learning to read is a fulfilling and pleasurable experience. (See primary reading curriculum plan)Our curriculum throughout school has a heavy emphasis on listening, language and vocabulary development. Children are encouraged to make the best use of their residual hearing through the use of amplification technology and will begin exploring sounds, both environmental and letter/sound correlations, as early as possible. Language and vocabulary development is at the forefront of every lesson in every curriculum area, with children explicitly taught the sign, spoken word and written word for all topic vocabulary. Many of our children have significant gaps in their vocabulary, therefore it is never assumed that children will know the ‘basic’ vocabulary and this is taught and reinforced as well as the higher level, subject specific vocabulary. To ensure the best chance of children retaining new vocabulary, a multi-sensory approach is used including visual support such as pictures and practical activities such as vocabulary games. Children have access to fluent models of both BSL and English therefore they can learn how these languages translate and are explicitly taught how this can be represented on the page. Taught reading sessions occur regularly for all children and these sessions can include any or several of the following, dependent on the child:* Systematic phonics where appropriate.
* 1:1 reading session with an adult, using colour banded reading books to ensure that children’s reading books are matched with their developing phonics/sight word recognition knowledge.
* Group guided reading sessions in which the following process is followed:
1. Pre-teach key vocabulary from the text being used (for example using a pictorial word mat or giving the children words to look up in the dictionary).
2. Activate prior knowledge about the topic through discussion about what we already know.
3. Teacher or Communication Support Worker (CSW) to tell the story in BSL, to provide context for the children.
4. Read the story together in English. This may include drawing children’s attention to specific phrases and discussing how these are translated from written English into BSL.
5. Participate in comprehension activities. These are linked to children’s individual reading targets.
6. Repeat and reinforce the same book or story several times to encourage fluency.
* Daily literacy sessions – these are separate to targeted reading sessions however they provide an opportunity for focused reading skills to be reinforced in context using high quality texts.
* Reading for pleasure opportunities - this can include books and stories being read aloud to children with a CSW providing BSL interpretation. Children are also encouraged to borrow books to take home which are outside of the reading scheme but which have caught their attention. Finally, reading is used as a reward (never a punishment!) and children are encouraged to choose a book to read during reward times at the end of a lesson.
* Home learning – children take home a reading book each week and are encouraged to read with an adult. This is the book that they have read the previous week in school to further encourage familiarity and fluency with that book. We are developing an incentive scheme to recognise and reward home reading.
* Bug club – this is an online reading tool in which teachers can add books to each child’s individual area to either be read in school or at home. These books are colour banded, to ensure that the books being added are matched to the child’s reading level. Each book, contains interactive questions for children to answer to check understanding. Children love using bug club as it is colourful, engaging and interactive and it also uses a very effective reward system in which children can access games based on the amount of books they have read.

**Assessment:**We use the York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC) to track our children’s progress in reading and this is carried out with each pupil twice a year. We then use these scores to determine areas of strength and weakness so that we can focus our teaching and intervention in the correct places. As well as this, teachers track individual children’s reading progress in a variety of ways, again dependent on what is best for that child. These assessments may include:* Regular phonics assessments to track progress (every 8 weeks).
* Termly reading comprehensions using the Bug Club assessments, which are directly linked to the colour banding scheme.
* Teacher assessments based on the national curriculum.
* National assessments, for example SATs papers for primary aged children or Functional Skills/GCSE exam papers for KS4 students.
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