

# Phonics teaching using Early Reading Research (ERR) methods

Shortstown Primary school was involved with a pilot phonics programme in 2003, led by Dr Jonathon Solity. The programme was successful in supporting all learning to develop early Literacy skills, especially around reading. The school continues to favour this approach of teaching phonics.

ERR is a whole-class reading programme in which children are taught as a whole class, rather than in small reading groups. Teachers are given professional development in structured, systematic methods of teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and oral reading.

## ERR Instructional Principles:

- Distributed practice (1-2 sessions of 15 minutes)
- Interleaved learning mixes new material with older, more familiar material which helps to prevent forgetting and aids retention.
- Children are taught through small units (i.e. grapheme-phoneme correspondences) rather than larger units (i.e. onset-rimes) as children appear to be able to generalise their knowledge of smaller units to large units but cannot always generalise from larger to small units.
- Children are taught one skill at a time, using 'pure' sounds (see link to 'Mr Thorne to support understanding on using 'pure' sounds <http://mrthorne.com>) and are shown how to apply their phonic knowledge to a wide range of texts.
- Support the teaching of reading through 'real books' rather than reading schemes. (see further information on the website)
- Skills are taught to high fluency levels.
- Children are only taught skills which are explicitly used when reading, writing and spelling.

## Background and findings from the Research:

The framework for teaching reading, writing and spelling within the ERR is evidence-based and its impact has been established through extensive classroom based research in mainstream schools with large numbers of pupils.

## Success for All (Teachers and Children)

The framework for teaching literacy is underpinned by generalisable principles of instruction which raise the attainments of all children, irrespective of their social background, ethnicity, or level of achievement. The framework also enables all teachers to become more effective and helps children across the attainment distribution to improve their reading, writing and spelling. As a result, reading failure is dramatically reduced and the progress of 'good readers' is accelerated.

## An Inclusive Approach

The curriculum content, classroom organisation and teaching methods enable teachers to implement the framework within a whole class context with children with a diverse range of needs. Teachers are shown how to differentiate the curriculum and underpin their teaching of all children with a common set of instructional principles. Teachers therefore, do not need to implement any additional programmes for teaching either phonics.

## Built in Model of Formative Assessment

The ERR framework for teaching literacy involves the regular formative assessment of children's progress. During reception this is often daily and so enables teachers to monitor children's learning systematically from the moment they start school. Assessment data is then used to inform how best to meet children's needs in the future. Thus, within the ERR, there is no need for separate early identification and assessment procedures for children thought to be experiencing difficulties in learning. Such information is available through the normal course of teaching. The assessment model is known as 'assessment-through-teaching' which is well established within the field of educational psychology (see Solity, 1993; 1995; 1996).