

## **READING PHILOSOPHY**

At Hob Green, English is taught through the thematic concepts of **story, culture, meaning and communication**. Pupils are taught that we are defined by our stories and that our lives change when our stories connect with those of others. Pupils learn that through the communicative power of the English language, culture is developed, maintained, modified and shared. As such, language provides a sense of individual and collective identity. By understanding *how* language is used, our pupils come to understand different viewpoints, interpretations, and beliefs about the world, and appreciate that the subtleties and complexities of the English language enable us to derive meaning from the stories we read and hear throughout our lives.

The teaching and learning of reading at Hob Green seeks to instil in our pupils a concrete grasp of these four thematic concepts. From learning how to decode text through the development of synthetic systematic phonics knowledge to the acquisition of in-depth comprehension skills, pupils are encouraged to make links between the four thematic concepts outlined above through the books they read. Our conceptual themes enable us to draw together three key foci: the cognitive focus (developing the thinking skills required to read and comprehend); the behavioural focus (how we structure our school day to ensure that reading and reading for pleasure is truly at the heart of our curriculum implementation); and the affective focus (the emotional connection pupils make with the books they read).

*“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.” **Joseph Addison***

### **Reading for Pleasure**

Evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002) finds that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. The potential that reading for pleasure has to transform the lives of young people, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is significant and as such, it is incumbent upon school leaders to ensure that our reading offer contains a commitment to the promotion of the intrinsic value of reading. Reading for pleasure in school is enhanced through termly author competitions aimed at extending pupils' knowledge of children's literature and reading for pleasure activities are timetabled to ensure that pupils learn how to express their ideas and make recommendations to others about the books they are reading and enjoying.

In the academic year of 2020-21, Hob Green is engaged in the Open University's Reading for Pleasure project, through which staff are being trained to broaden their own knowledge of children's literature and grow key pedagogies aimed at further developing a love of reading in our pupils. In summary, this focus on reading for pleasure ensures that the behavioural and affective elements of a strong reading offer are firmly in place at Hob Green.

## **Texts**

The provision for children's reading is meticulously organised, from when children start in nursery through to becoming literate 11-year-olds. Teachers select rich texts to share with children through 'read aloud' as part of literacy lessons, story time and during the delivery of the wider curriculum. Class libraries are a central aspect of our reading areas. Pupils research new and exciting authors and titles for their class libraries and are responsible for tracking book loans and looking after their stock of books. Pupils are encouraged to engage in book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations in order to fuel their passion for reading.

## **Early Reading Texts (Reception and KS1)**

Pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 will read **phonetically decodable** texts until they have reached Letters and Sounds Phase 6 or completed the programme. Those pupils requiring additional support with decoding as they enter Key Stage 2, will also have age- appropriate decodable texts included in their diet of in-school and home-reading texts. Pupils reading phonetically decodable books take home a second book aimed not directly at the application of phonics, but instead at the development of a love of literature. It is made clear to pupils and parents that these books are best enjoyed with the support of an adult as children may not necessarily be able to decode all of the words in these books. These books tend to be longer and focus more on engaging young readers through character development and plot in a way that is not always possible in phonetically decodable books – especially those focused on the lower phases of the Letters and Sounds programme.

In Reception, pupils are supported through Phases 2 and 3 of Letters and Sounds by the daily reading of either Bug Club Phonics books or Floppy's Phonics books 2-6. Phase 4 is supported by Bug Club Phonics titles. A minority of pupils will need additional support with Phases 2 and 3 when they begin Year 1. To avoid a potentially demoralising repetition of reading books, Phase 2 and 3 in Year 1 are supported by the Songbird collection of phonetically decodable titles (Phase 2 – purple; Phase 3 – green and blue). Year 1 pupils read

Bug Club Phonics books when they reach Phase 4 and in Phase 5 Bug club Phonics and Songbird red, yellow and orange titles provide pupils with ample opportunities to apply their new learning.

In Year 2, pupils identified as needing additional support with reading may need to revisit phases 2 and 3. Their learning is supported through the reading of Floppy's Phonics and Project X titles, the latter in particular reflecting their advancing emotional and intellectual maturity, whilst supporting their word reading needs. Pupils in Year 2 (and indeed those in Lower Key Stage 2 requiring additional support) working on Phases 4 and 5 read Project X, Floppy's Phonics and Bug Club titles to enhance their phonics learning.

### **Key Stage 2 Texts**

A range of narrative, non-fiction and poetry books are made available for pupils to choose from throughout the school and in Key Stage 2, pupils engage with the Accelerated Reader programme, which is aimed at tracking reading progress and motivating pupils to explore the many titles on offer within their assessed reading range, or zone of proximal development (ZPD). Half-termly 'Star Reader' assessments ensure that pupils are reading books that are pitched appropriately to match their current stage of reading development. The class library titles selected by the children offer additional 'reading for pleasure' opportunities and are issued to pupils alongside the levelled books that are part of the Accelerated Reader scheme.

### **Word Reading**

Children entering 'Time-for-Twos' and nursery are exposed to a range of early literacy experiences. Developing language acquisition is a key focus and in addition to the use of songs, rhymes, games and toys, speaking and listening activities such as 'read aloud' and shared 'book-talk' are an important element of the learning that takes place each day. In order to get children attuned to the sounds around them and to prepare them to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills when they engage with our phonics programme in Reception, Phase 1 of 'Letters and Sounds' is explored in Nursery. Opportunities are taken to develop pupils' awareness of initial sounds during speaking and listening activities. Children who are deemed to be ready are introduced, as a group, to Phase 2 phonics and learn to distinguish between sounds. During these sessions they focus on oral blending for reading and segmenting for the spelling of simple CVC words.

In Reception, daily phonics lessons take place, following the suggested Letters and Sounds sequence of teaching: introduction, revisit and review, teach, practise, apply and assess. A meticulously planned scheme of work maps pupils' progression through phrases 1 – 4, with the expectation that the majority of children will be secure in Phase 4 by the end of the year. Pupils are offered the opportunity to apply their evolving

phonics learning across the curriculum, reading and spelling a wide range of CVC words, less frequently used consonant digraphs and some long vowel phonemes. Building on this, children will then learn CVC words using a wider range of letters, short vowel sounds and double letters.

## **Comprehension**

Comprehension skills are developed during two dedicated reading lessons each week across key stages 1 and 2. The content domains for reading – as laid out in the National Curriculum – are taught through the pupil-friendly and engaging system of 'VIPERS'. This acronym, representing vocabulary, infer, predict, explain, retrieve and sequence (KS1)/ summarise (KS2), provides a model that pupils are able to understand and articulate clearly. In each comprehension lesson, teachers make it clear to pupils which 'viper' is the primary focus of the lesson and as a result, children learn specific strategies for developing the different aspects of reading comprehension as prescribed through the content domains. Progression documents for each of the six VIPERS (reflecting the programmes of study set-out in the National Curriculum) ensure that pupils develop skills within each content domain as they move through the school.

Comprehension lessons are taught through age-appropriate texts selected by class teachers and based on thematic links with other areas of the curriculum. Although comprehension lessons are taught on a whole-class basis, teachers work with a group in each lesson in order to further develop the skill that has just been taught. In these guided groups, the teacher draws on the specific training he or she has received in order to deepen pupils' understanding through high-quality discussion, during which precise and timely verbal feedback is delivered in order to help children to make accelerated progress. The guided group is rotated to ensure that every pupil benefits from this learning experience with the class teacher. The texts for each guided group are chosen on the basis of the reading ability and reading interests of the pupils in question.

Progress in the comprehension of texts is reliant on the development of linguistic knowledge (in particular of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world. As such, comprehension lessons focus on drawing out new and unfamiliar vocabulary (which pupils in Key Stage 2 record in a 'Words and Phrases Journal') and make close links to the grammatical structures being learnt in writing within in each year group. Furthermore, reading lessons are frequently linked to the genres being studied in writing to ensure that a wide range of stories, poems and non-fiction is explored through comprehension. In Key Stage 2, an additional weekly comprehension lesson takes place at the beginning of either a humanities or science lesson. This lesson has a 'test skills' focus and the context ensures that non-fiction features prominently in the reading offer.

In order to broaden pupils' knowledge of the world – the second of the two pivotal aspects of good reading comprehension development – the wider curriculum offer aims to develop carefully sequenced knowledge

across the foundation subjects and of course, science. Rich texts are explored in all of these subjects to encourage pupils to make the association between reading and a growing knowledge and understanding of both themselves and the world in which they live.

### **Planning and Assessment**

Teachers plan phonics lessons to build on carefully sequenced knowledge of phonemes and graphemes, as outlined in the Letters and Sounds programme. Progress in phonics is regularly assessed through within-phase checks ('tricky word' knowledge is assessed here too) and phonics screening tests. Year 1 pupils undergo the statutory phonics screening test in the summer term.

Teachers plan comprehension lessons using National Curriculum statements (age-related expectation targets) and the statements laid out in the VIPERS progression documents that are provided to them. After each comprehension lesson, teachers assess pupils' progress against the selected National Curriculum statement and within the content domain (or 'viper') being taught. Pupils sit reading tests termly and teachers use the results of these tests, along with the evidence collated in pupils' reading journals, in order to make a professional judgement as to whether each child is working at the expected standard for their year group. Some pupils will be judged to be 'working towards' the expected standard, whilst others may be deemed to be working at 'greater depth'. Reading comprehension is formally assessed in the statutory end-of-key-stage tests (SATs) in Years 2 and 6.

### **The Home-School Link and Community Volunteers**

*"One of the greatest gifts adults can give—to their offspring and to their society—is to read to children." Carl Sagan*

Given that the complex skill of reading is one best developed through regular practice, the home-school link is a highly valued element of the Hob Green reading offer. Parents of pupils in EYFS and Key Stage 1 are provided with information about the phonetically decodable books that their child brings home to read in order to empower them to facilitate their child's ongoing development at home. In key stages 1 and 2, parents receive 'question stems' on a weekly basis to aid them in their efforts to develop their child's comprehension skills by asking a range of questions about the book he or she is reading. The question stems sent home are selected on the basis of the content domain (or 'viper') being taught in class that week. Teachers, parents and pupils make use of a 'communication book' to ensure that home reading is documented, monitored and above all, celebrated.

Volunteers from the community support the development of pupils' reading by coming into school on a regular basis to hear children read, discuss books with them and act as reading ambassadors, promoting the value of reading to the children.

*"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."*

**Victor Hugo**