

NOVAC (Note of visit and contact)

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| School: | Hunslet Carr Primary School | Date: | 15.7.21 |
| Author: | Steve Dawson, SIC | Staff contact: | Elisa Whitfield, Phonics lead |
| Headteacher: | Martin Lumb | Link Adviser: | Jackie Read |
| Visit Details: | Summary of phonics observations and discussions | | |

Purpose of the visit and focus of the support or training:

The SIC carried out a brief review of the teaching of phonics, at the request of the phonics lead, to ensure that the school were 'on the right lines' in light of the recent changes to phonics programme criteria. This included observing teaching in Reception, Y1, Y2 and a one to one intervention with a child in Y5. The phonics team has recently visited a school in Selby using the 'Sounds-Write' phonics programme, but still had questions about their own practice and what they wanted to retain.

Outcomes/Summary of the visit:

- The SIC observed routine sessions for phonics as they would normally be taught.

Reception

- The class looked at 'gl' blends. Teacher modelling was good and learning behaviour was excellent. The four-part structure of 'review-teach-practise-apply' was followed and the lesson was well planned. The teaching of blends as a unit of sound was not good practice and made it difficult for some children to then isolate sounds so that they could write dictated words and then sentences; the teacher acknowledged this was an 'experimental-lesson' and her practice and knowledge of phonics is sound.

Year 1

- The focus here was on a good range of multisyllabic and compound words. The session was well structured, with excellent learning behaviour and teacher modelling. The structure of the lesson was very familiar to the children, with the use of a phoneme frame, syllables clapped out, sounds then isolated using phoneme fingers and children writing the words/sentences. Differentiation was well planned with a group supported by a TA. Be aware of giving words that do not fit onto the phoneme frame given.

Year 2

- The class looked at an initial focus of High Frequency words (HFWs), with an engaging activity of HFWs with letters jumbled for children to work out. The main focus was on the 'ly' suffix, with good partner work and again excellent learning behaviour and teacher modelling. The lesson was very well structured and scaffolded, and for that reason most children succeeded in the tasks.

Intervention

- The TA worked one to one with a child in Y5. The child had passed the phonics screening check in Y2, but had regressed in her phonics and spelling ability in KS2. The session was fast paced, well planned and extremely well resourced. The TA's manner and professionalism with the child was excellent. As minor improvement points, avoid the use of blends as units of sound until absolutely certain that the child can isolate very sound in the word. Also, teach the 'se' ending as an alternative spelling to the 's/ss' phoneme, rather than a silent letter.

Recommendations/Agreed Actions:

The SIC met with the phonics team to discuss findings from the observations. The following are recommendations for action and to move phonics forward:

1. The phonics team visit to see 'Sounds Write' (S-W) in action had thrown up a lot of questions and soul searching about the school's practice. They liked the S-W approach of teaching digraphs later, i.e. after consonant blends rather than before - as in Letters and Sounds – and wondered if this could be incorporated into their own teaching; this was at the heart of the experimental lessons seen and also some elements of the intervention session. The difficulty with doing this was that the Letters and Sounds programme would no longer be taught with fidelity and would be criticised at an inspection. The SIC suggested that staff teach elements of consonant blends alongside the digraphs at Phase 3, such as with 'rain', then also 'brain', 'train', etc. as a matter of course. If any children need intervention after having got stuck at Phase 3, for example, or after significant input are still not making progress, then digraphs could be pushed back after consonant blends for such children. This is the approach of the LA SENIT team and is good advice. This would not then break with the fidelity to the programme of Letters and Sounds for mainstream teaching.
2. The team had carried out the suggested audit based on the 16 criteria provided by the DfE for validated phonics programmes and this had been useful to see where gaps were and where practice needed to be shored up. As a result, the team were ensuring that all phonically decodable texts were ordered and sorted by letter-sound groupings, rather than just phases. This is a big task but staff are ongoing with this.
3. The phonic team need to produce a simple two sides of A4 document outlining the school 'non-negotiables' on phonics, to cover such things as when to use sound buttons, phoneme fingers, teacher patter, appropriate resources etc. This will help to ensure consistency across the school.
4. The order and sequencing of Phase 5 was discussed and this was something that staff had been aware of as a weakness, but especially after the S-W visit. The SIC suggested a week or so on a particular spelling pattern – such as 'ai/ay/a-e' – so that children could build on what they know and make for less cognitive demand. This will also support differentiation. The SIC will send a suggested plan for Phase 5.
5. When displaying phonics to support learning – especially at Phase 5 – provide word examples for each letter sound spelling alternative, not just the spelling pattern.
6. Both the SIC and school agree that the primary area for development is the teaching of phonics in KS2. Teaching and practice is sound in R and KS1, but the school has the ambition of all children being phonically proficient by the end of KS2 and as such the team need to urgently find out what phonics provision exists in KS2, how children who have not passed the PSC are supported, whether staff phonics knowledge needs improving and to ensure that the good practice seen in Y2 can be mirrored in Y3.

Overall, there were many things to praise in the teaching of phonics seen. It is also worth mentioning that the classroom learning environment and working walls were exemplary,

Distribution list

Headteacher

Link Adviser

Other Consultant (if relevant)