Early Reading at Colman Infant School: Phonics

Intent

'Literacy is so much entwined in our lives that we often fail to realise that the act of reading is a miracle that is evolving under our fingertips.' Dr Maryanne Wolf

At CIS we understand that all the skills of language, speaking, reading and writing, are essential to effective communication, to education, and to an individual's full participation in society. We make it our mission to give children the best possible start by teaching the phonic knowledge and skills they need to be accurate, fluent readers and by promoting a robust reading culture that nurtures a love of books and literature.
Our complex alphabetic code has 26 letters used singly or in combination, to represent 44 sounds. Phonics is an essential element of English in the NC and we use Read Write Inc. (RWI), a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme, as our whole school approach to teaching early reading and spelling.

Big Ideas

Reading fuels imagination and opens up a world of awe, wonder and joy. Reading widely supports pupils' cultural, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual development. At CIS we read aloud to children every day, giving them access to language and literature beyond their reading ability. Through our curriculum pupils encounter poems, rhymes and songs. Reciting rhythmic patterns helps develop a sense of alliteration, and phonological awareness, the ability to work with sounds in spoken language required for decoding, blending, and word reading.

Language

Partner work is at the heart of RWI. Children work and talk in pairs to enhance their spoken language and embed their understanding.
As pupils decode unfamiliar words, they encounter new vocabulary.
In RWI sessions vocabulary is taught using books that are carefully matched to the sounds pupils know.
Evidence suggests that children learn to read words at a glance more easily if, when they first decode a word, they know what the word means.
RWI books include thought-provoking introductions and prompts for discussion.

Connected

Reading fluently and with good understanding is vital for pupils' success across the curriculum.
Word reading and spelling are 'reversible' processes. In RWI pupils learn to read sounds and blend them into words. They apply this phonic knowledge to read and comprehend books that are carefully matched to the sounds they know.
Pupils learn to spell accurately using their phonic knowledge and 'Fred fingers'. In a weekly review children practise 'holding a sentence' in mind before writing it using the graphemes and 'tricky' words they have learnt.

Knowledge Based

At CIS we encourage reading across both fiction and non-fiction to help pupils acquire new knowledge and to build on what they already know. Phonics sessions begin as soon as children start their Reception year and decodable RWI books allow children to read every word as their knowledge of the alphabetic code increases. RWI prioritises the teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) so that they generate the most words at each stage of the programme. More complex GPCs are systematically introduced to widen children's understanding of spelling rules.
During RWI sessions children practise using the sound and word knowledge that they have been taught in previous lessons until they can use it automatically. Pupils are supported to connect new knowledge with previous learning and are encouraged to transfer and apply what they have learnt in RWI sessions into their independent work.

Remember?

RWI is designed to ensure reading progress for every child:
Established routines and signals allow the children to focus on the learning.
Teachers demonstrate new learning in sequenced, bite-sized chunks.
Pupils are taught GPCs and learn that letters provide symbols for sounds.
Repetition supports automatic recall.
When pupils read words with accuracy and automaticity the brain has capacity to gain meaning from text making reading more enjoyable.
Pupils think out loud before writing to help them hold more complex ideas

Progression

Children work in homogenous groups to master each level of phonics.
Regular assessment and re-grouping means pupils are learning at their 'challenge' level and can quickly progress through the phonic stages.
Engaging RWI books are closely matched to their knowledge of phonics and 'tricky' words, and repeat readings ensure the text is understood and read with fluency.
Children learn to read fiction books with a storyteller's voice.
RWI teaches the phonic skills pupils need to be able to read, and spell well to access learning in KS2.

Ambitious

We have high aspirations for all our pupils and believe that all children can learn to read. RWI is an evidence informed SSP and our reading leaders receive regular training to ensure fidelity to the scheme. High-quality group teaching is an efficient and effective way of ensuring good progress for most children. Our skilled RWI leaders deliver pacey, motivating sessions and pupils demonstrate strong behaviours for learning and enjoyment. Additional 1-1 tutoring supports and accelerates the progress of those who need extra practice to keep up.