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Phonics is a way of teaching students how to read and write. It helps students hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Written language is best compared to a code, so knowing the sounds of individual letters and how those letters sound when they're blended, will support students to decode words as they practice their reading. To understand phonics is to know which letters to use when writing words. Phonics facilitates the matching the sounds of spoken English with either, individual letters or collective letters. Ultimately, teaching students to blend the sounds of letters will help them decode unfamiliar or unknown sounds by sounding them out.

"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it"- Oscar Wilde.

1. Phonics Intent

At Howard House School, Phonics is taught so that it is accessible to all: every student knows more, remembers more and understands more. Phonics is a key dexterity which encourages the growth of early reading skills. We merge quality phonics instruction with exposure to a wide range of texts. In doing so, we promote reading for pleasure to provide our students with the necessary skills they need to have a successful beginning to their lives as readers.

Being able to access the curriculum through reading is the most important skill children need to learn in order to support and develop lifelong confidence and well-being. We aim to teach high-quality phonics to provide our students with the skillset of reading and writing. Students must know how to decode recognise and decode the words on the page in order to read. A security in word recognition and decoding contributes to reading fluency and we aim to achieve this through good quality phonics teaching. As a result, students will be able to read for pleasure and begin to access higher order reading for meaning skills. Phonic skills will be taught using a variety of resources, for example through multi-sensory learning, to meet and accommodate to the needs of all learners.

2. Phonics Implementation

To implement our intent, we teach daily Phonics sessions as well as embedding phonics skills on a daily basis in other curriculum lessons as part of teaching and learning. The content of each session and structure of Phonics across the week covers all aspects of blending and segmenting, with students having opportunities to apply this knowledge into their reading and writing.

At Howard House School, we follow the systematic approach of Twinkl Phonics, a systematic, synthetic phonics scheme validated by the DfE which helps students to build and develop the skills they need to become independent and effective readers and writers. Our sessions follow a cohesive and consistent approach, which uses the same structure of: Revisit/Recap, Teach, Practise, Apply and Assess. This ensures children can consolidate their knowledge and skills of phonics over time and are able to contextually apply them. Staff complete weekly short-term plans for phonics, which build progressively on learning and ensure the delivery of effective, high-quality teaching.

Sessions also deliver the '4 cornerstones' of Phonics, which involve the rapid recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs), the reading and recognition of 'tricky' or common exception words, students being able to synthesise (blend) in order to read a word, as well as segment words into phonemes for spelling. Students should be aware that blending and segmenting are reversible processes -sessions will allow pupils to understand that if you can blend the sounds together to read a word, you should also be able to break down the individual sounds in a word in order to spell it.

Assessment of Phonics is purposeful and beneficial, allowing the correct level of work to be matched to the needs of students, as well as identifying gaps in learning. Each individual student who attends phonics sessions has their own phonics assessment tracker, which is updated each term and can be monitored and added to as they progress through the school. During sessions, information for assessment is gathered through a variety of ways, including asking children open and closed questions to check for understanding, observing their work and assigning specific tasks. This information is used to plan and tailor future lessons to the needs of the student and set new targets. The progress students make in Phonics is regularly assessed across the year. At the end of each level, the learner will take part in an assessment which consists of three sections: Grapheme Recognition, Decodable Words, and Common Exception Words. Each section is split into a reading and writing task. Students in school who are identified as having a reading age of lower than 8 will participate in a Phonics screening check to assess a baseline of their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence and identify any missing sounds they are yet to learn.

The Phonics lead is responsible for the organisation and delivery of Phonics sessions, through monitoring teaching and learning to improve standards and outcomes. This also includes:

- Advising and supporting colleagues to embed phonics skills in their individual curriculum subjects
- Maintenance of resources required for the teaching of Phonics
- Ensuring students are progressing and acquiring phonics knowledge throughout each phase
- Ensuring the delivery of a curriculum that meets the needs of all students (including SEND and SEMH)

Phonics skills will be supported further by Rhino Readers reading scheme, encouraging students to bridge the gap and take children from decoding to fluency. This will include accessing content through eBooks as well as physical copies. Students will be able to improve their Phonics skills by accessing these from home and practising outside of the classroom.

3. Phonics Impact

We hope for all our students at Howard House to confidently secure their knowledge of phonics. In doing so, to securely blend and segment their words, in line with the phonics screening. More importantly, for all our students to secure a love for reading. We ought to maintain a culture where a secure knowledge of phonics sounds enables reading for pleasure as part of our reading curriculum.

We encourage for parents and carers to play a role in our students learning of phonics. This is encouraged through supporting students with Rhino Readers phonics content, whether that be reading a physical copy of a book with their child, accessing an eBook or completing a range of phonics activities that can be accessed via the Rhino Readers app. This enables students to learn phonics beyond the classroom and for parents and carers to be part of this learning experience.