

Reading and Communication at Birch Wood School

'Where a love of learning grows'



**Birch Wood
School**



**Birch Wood
Vale School**



**Birch Wood
Autism Provision**

Birch Wood School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Ratified:

Signature: _____ (Chair of Governors)

Print name: _____

Last Review: June 2022

Next Review: June 2023

Introduction

This policy focuses and details the whole school teaching and learning of reading and communication skills, ensuring that pupils leave Birch Wood School with the essential skills in this area to prepare them for adult life. It incorporates guidance on participation in a whole school approach to reading and communication, and also details the assessment and monitoring of reading and communication at Birch Wood School. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant whole school policy documentation.

Birch Wood Vision and Values

At Birch Wood school we have a very clear mission statement in line with our core values and ethos, which forms our ENABLES culture:

E- Empowering students for independent lives.

N- Nurture

A- Aspire and Achieve

B- Belonging

L- Love of learning grows

E- Engage and Interact

S- Safe and happy

At all times we promote our pupil's success by emphasising their abilities, not disabilities, we provide a broad, balanced, well-resourced curriculum as well as a wide range of relevant and motivating experiences. Birch Wood creates a caring, stimulating, challenging environment, free from inhibiting pressures and restrictions, where pupils can grow in confidence and self-esteem.

Statement of Aims

This school is committed to making an appropriate provision for the teaching of reading and communication skills and to raising the achievement of those students who are at risk of underachievement in these areas. The school will identify individual students' needs, celebrate the skills and diversity that they bring to school and ensure equality of access to the curriculum.

We aim to:

- develop an inclusive and cohesive learning framework to support the reading and communication development of all students across the curriculum;
- ensure that intervention and additional support for reading and communication skills are purposefully focused on language for learning and life beyond school, understanding of subject content and effective communication with others;
- proactively remove barriers that stand in the way of our students' development of reading and communication skills and their overall educational achievement;

- increase the confidence and skillset of all staff members to be able to confidently teach reading and communication skills, regardless of their subject specialism and background;
- develop a consistent whole school approach to the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills; and
- provide our students with a safe, welcoming, nurturing environment in which they can make mistakes, practise, and take risks to improve their reading and communication skills.

We aim to ensure that our students:

- use the English language confidently and competently when communicating with all staff, peers, friends and family;
- use their verbal and written communication skills to learn well in all subjects across the curriculum;
- make at least expected progress for their individual ability; and
- have the confidence and communication skills to embody an active role within the wider school community.

Underlying Principles

- We are an inclusive school; our students are entitled to opportunities for educational success that are equal to their peers.
- SEND students are not a homogenous group; their needs vary according to a range of factors. We provide a range of teaching and learning activities to meet curriculum demands and different learning needs/styles.
- The diversity of our students and their needs enrich our school and our community.
- It is the responsibility of all teachers to ensure that lessons are appropriately differentiated to meet the range of reading and communication needs within their class.

Home / School Links

- The importance of home/school links cannot be underestimated. Parents will be kept informed of the progress of their child and what they can do to support progress at home. Parents and carers will be supported in ensuring that good lines of communication are maintained with the class teacher, support staff and the Reading and Communication Lead, where appropriate, ensuring a joined-up approach to students' progress. We use Kinteract, a digital learning platform that enables us to share achievements, observations, photos and videos with parents and carers. This is an excellent tool which we use to model reading strategies to our parents and to celebrate National Reading initiatives such as World Book Day and Roald Dahl Day.
- Parents are encouraged to engage in regular communication with all of the teachers involved in their child's learning; to attend meetings such as Parents' Evenings and

EHCP annual reviews to meet with teachers as and when it is deemed necessary for the progress of their child.

Roles and Responsibilities

There is a collective responsibility held by all staff to identify and remove barriers that stand in the way of our students learning the reading and communication skills that they need for life beyond school.

- The **Reading and Communication Leads** are Tom Bradley-Hewell, Michelle Walker and Hannah O'Mara.
- The **Reading Working Party** consists of the Reading and Communication Leads and Poppy Marriott, who leads reading at our Grange Drive site whilst Emily Saxby and Catherine Mitchell, lead at BWV and Ashton House.
- The **Communication Lead** is Sarah Wilson

Everyone at Birch Wood is a Leader of Reading and Communication...

- We provide young people with the opportunity to read, and learn to read, at every stage of education.
- We role model positive and healthy interactions
- We create a language-rich environment that is sensitive to the needs of the individual
- We plan for the needs of the individual and consider reading and communication in every lesson
- We seek to utilise every opportunity to develop reading and communication

The Senior Leadership team will:

- consider and facilitate changes needed to the school's systems and processes in order to ensure the school delivers a consistent approach to teaching reading and communication skills to all students;
- ensure the provision for reading and communication development is included within the school development plan;
- facilitate regular provision for training of all staff related to the teaching and learning of reading and communication;
- ensure school budget assigned for reading and communication is deployed strategically and is used to support the needs of students at all stages of language and communication proficiency;
- ensure that teaching staff are aware of how to use reading and communication attainment data, and that it is used effectively to differentiate learning;
- promote the engagement of parents/ carers of students who may need additional support with their reading and communication skills by actively seeking their views: reaching out to parents/ carers less confident in using these skills themselves.

The Reading and Communication Lead will:

- support all students to improve their reading and communication skills across the curriculum in partnership with subject /class teachers;
- provide CPD for staff to ensure that staff are aware of how to cater for the differing reading and communication needs in their classes;
- work closely with subject/class teachers and support staff, in addition to students and their parents, to ensure excellent progress is made, quickly identifying and acting to remove any potential barriers to learning that may arise;
- conduct careful and regular assessment of students' reading and communication skills, identifying the level of support needed and sharing this information with the relevant staff to ensure that the learning needs of all students are met;
- ensure that appropriate access arrangements are made for assessments and exams;
- ensure that any intervention lessons are time limited and carefully monitored for impact, ensuring full access to the curriculum;
- ensure that students with low reading and communication skills and who are under-achieving are targeted for support at key enrichment activities such as homework clubs and revision clubs and their attendance is monitored;
- ensure classroom and corridor displays positively reflect high expectations for reading and communication skills from all students.

Reading Working Party will:

- support classroom teachers with how to differentiate schemes of work and lesson plans to cater for a wide range of reading and communication needs;
- ensure that key vocabulary for specific topics is available to be distributed to class teachers for pre-teaching, or for use in conjunction with images on lesson resources;
- ensure that departmental schemes of work and lesson plans show evidence of high expectations of all students in relation to their reading and communication skills, as well as opportunities to develop these skills across units of work;
- ensure they and their department attend relevant INSET designed to maximise teaching opportunities for reading and communication strategies; and
- when completing marking scrutiny, ensure that language misconceptions and errors are being identified by teachers and corrected via either verbal or written feedback.

Teachers will:

- know the students in their classes; understand their different reading and communication needs and ensure accessibility of lesson content;
- follow "best practice" guidelines for differentiation for students with varying levels of reading and communication capabilities. E.g. dual coding, key words and simple phrases;
- speak clearly and make eye contact, ensuring to be mindful that tone and pitch of voice models effective communication;

- provide students with opportunities to learn and understand vocabulary linked to the learning;
- consider how the classroom environment and displays support and celebrate high expectations of reading and communication skills;
- give students the opportunity to verbally rehearse ideas and answers in a safe environment with a partner;
- provide opportunities for group and paired speaking and listening activities with clear outcomes, speaking frames, models and prompting questions and ideas;
- provide resources that enable students to work independently on the lesson content: writing frames, sentence starters and cloze paragraphs;
- always use standard English and ensure that this is the expectation of all students within the classroom;
- use marking and feedback as a way to build confidence and also to correct reading and communication misunderstandings and errors;
- attend relevant in-school training to maximise teaching and learning of reading and communication skills, and ensure that strategies and resources are embedded within lessons;
- provide opportunities for students to learn key words and phrases that are necessary to understand the lesson content before the lesson; and
- seek support from the Reading Working Party if unsure of how to cater for a student.

Support Staff will:

- support and teach vocabulary to students. Support students with their reading and communication skills through all lessons.
- encourage students to write down key words from the lesson to practise at home and form time;
- use Makaton, visuals and communication devices to support understanding of new vocabulary and concepts;
- offer writing frames for students where appropriate;
- always use standard English;
- attend relevant INSET designed to maximise the teaching of reading and communication skills; and
- seek support from the Reading Working Party if unsure of how to support any student.

Monitoring this Policy

- All staff are responsible for implementing this policy and for ensuring that the needs of students in their care are met.
- The Reading Working Party will collect and analyse reading age data.
- This policy document will be reviewed each year to ensure it best reflects the school's approach to developing reading and communication skills.

Reading and Communication: The Bedrock of the Curriculum at Birch Wood:

We view reading and communication as the foundation of our curriculum from which everything is built upon. We give reading and communication such high status as we believe reading and communication does the following:

- **Exposes pupils to new ideas, concepts, information and opinions.**
 - Some pupils at Birch Wood may struggle to access wider society independently and so do not always have the chance to discover all that is around them. By ensuring exposure to high quality texts we can open more of the world to our pupils in the hope that it excites, intrigues and motivates our young people to fulfil their potential.
- **Helps pupils to decode the world around them.**
 - Both reading and communication help us to decode the world around us. From the information we find in recipes to the interactions in a local shop. Without these essential tools, life becomes increasingly difficult. As a school, we are committed to preparing all of our young people for adulthood and ensuring they are as independent as possible.
- **Helping pupils to communicate**
 - At Birch Wood, reading and communication means more than just the written word and text. Many of our pupils on the Engagement pathway will learn to “read” and to communicate using photographs, symbols, objects and even smells. Many of our pupils are non-speaking and as such will rely on their own unique communication methods, such as Makaton, body signing, eye gazing, reaching/pointing, vocalisations, facial expression and gesture. It is using these methods that our young people can not only read and make choices, but also have control and independence of the world around them.
- **Removes barriers to learning and enables pupil’s independent access to curriculum content.**
 - For a lot of the pupils at Birch Wood, the ability to read can be a barrier to learning. Teachers at Birch Wood are experts at enabling success and it is important we try to remove these barriers as soon as possible. Targeted interventions for those on the Aspire Pathway supports reading, whilst communication tools such as PECS may support those on the Independence Pathway. The Engagement Pathway is designed to focus on the young people’s communication needs and will include AAC strategies and techniques with pupils’ individual communication methods and needs in mind, enabling them to access curriculum content.

- **Can deepen knowledge and enrich understanding**
 - Through explicit teaching of subject specific vocabulary pupils on the independence and aspire pathway can deepen their subject knowledge as well as expand their academic vocabulary.
- **Can strengthen relationships and help pupils to understand positive and healthy interactions**
 - Social stories are one example of how reading can help develop and strengthen relationships and promote positive interactions. Many of the pupils at Birch Wood have Communication and Interaction needs and so much of what we do centres on developing positive relationships and supporting interactions.
- **Can bring joy and happiness**
 - Birch Wood aims to create a love of learning and it is within this ethos that we aim to nurture a love of reading for all pupils. This could be engaging with a sensory story for pupils on the engagement pathway or enabling our young people on the Aspire pathway to choose books that they enjoy.
- **Can help keep pupils safe**
 - Reading and Communication is an important aspect of keeping our young people safe – inside and outside of school. We aim to provide the tools for all of our pupils to communicate their needs and express any concerns or worries.

Phonics

Phonics is the primary method of teaching reading at Birch Wood School. We provide all students with the opportunity to read, and learn to read, at every stage of their education here at Birch Wood. We take a balanced approach to the instruction of reading and utilise schemes provided by Ruth Miskin.



For early readers on the independence pathway and the aspire pathway, who will be from EYFS to KS2, students will have access to discrete phonics sessions which are adapted from Ruth Miskin's Read, Write Inc scheme. The teaching of early reading, like many aspects of our school curriculum, is personalised to the individual and adapted to their strengths and needs.

Within the Engagement pathway, students do not access discrete Read Write Inc sessions. Instead, the focus is on their pre-phonics skills; developing their awareness and discrimination of environmental and speech sounds. We do this through music sessions, communication games and intensive interaction. These students will have personalised sessions to experience the joy of reading through immersive and high quality multi-sensory experiences to enhance their preferred method of communication.

As a school, we also use RWI Fresh Start Phonics to support young people with reading accurately and fluently and provide them with the skills to further develop good comprehension, spelling and punctuation through specific activities, whilst also supplementing their phonological awareness. Once a student has a reading age of 7, students will begin to benefit from Fresh Start Phonics and will no longer require discrete phonics sessions.

Students who may not be able to access Read, Write Inc, receive, within their daily curriculum, support relating to their communication skills with a focus on functional reading. In KS4 and KS5, students will focus on learning functional reading skills which will help prepare them for adulthood as they continue to develop their independence and future life skills, and will therefore not access discrete phonics lessons.

We continually research alternative packages to support with reading to give our students the best possible chance of success.

 Phonics Assessments	
Independence Pathway Phonics Assessments should be completed for students on the independence pathway where appropriate based on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will be completed on a termly basis and students will be given the opportunity to be assessed.	Aspire Pathway Phonics assessments should be completed on a termly basis to all students on this pathway. Once students become free readers then they will no longer require phonics assessments.

The Learning Environment

When creating a curriculum that will provide opportunities to develop a love of reading we recognise that we must pay specific attention to the learning environment. We like to ensure that we:

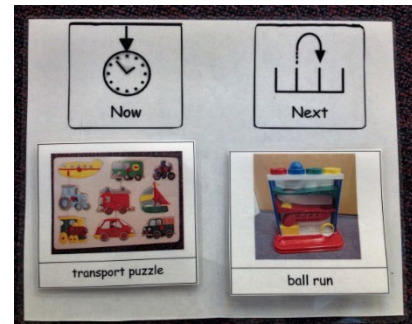
- Keep our classrooms as distraction free as possible. We try to avoid clutter and ensure the room is clearly laid out, with designated areas for designated activities wherever possible. For example, an area for group work, a space where independent work could take place, (Work Stations if appropriate) reading/chill out area.
- Placing labels on cupboards so it is clear where things belong– this will encourage independence.



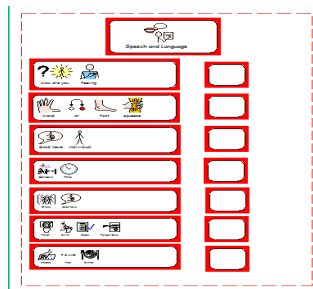
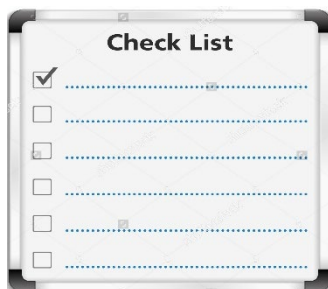
- At Birch Wood, we consider what we put on our walls. We know that for some students that bright, colourful and engaging displays are motivating. However, this type of classroom can in fact be overwhelming for students on the autism spectrum and act as a constant distraction from learning. Due to the high percentage of CYP with Autism at our school, we ensure that our classrooms are conducive to a positive learning environment. All displays in our classrooms should be backed and bordered with the same colour.
- Clear, consistent and predictable classroom routines need to be set up so that students know what to do when they arrive in the classroom. Classrooms will display a visual timetable to demonstrate the set routines for activities, or for the day.



- Communication aids need to be readily available so that students can access them whenever they need. This will encourage further independence within the classroom.

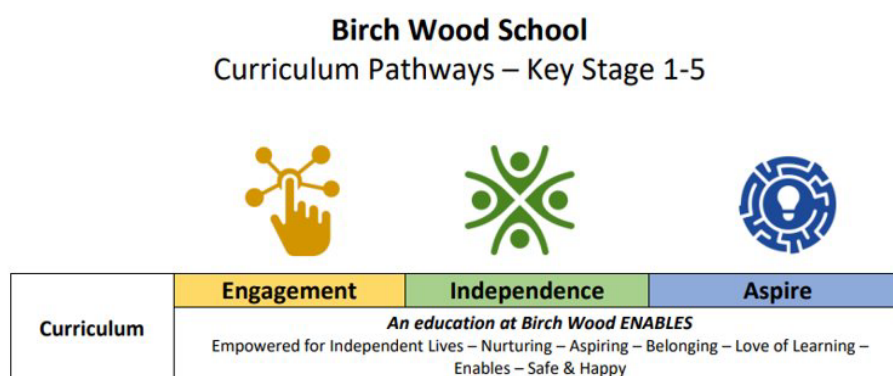


- Work must be broken down into manageable chunks. Where possible provide students with a visual which allows them to see the work they have completed and what is still to be done. This could be a simple tick visual on your whiteboard for all students or a tick sheet which you provide to individuals.



What does reading look like at Birch Wood School?

The three curriculum pathways at Birch Wood are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of learners with an EHCP and ensures we have 'ambition without limits'. We provide a bespoke approach to our pupils' very individual needs which allows us to ensure that our approach to reading is personalised to each young person whilst being embedded within the curriculum. Each of our pathways are focused on preparing the individual for adulthood and to provide them with opportunities to develop their independence.



More information about our curriculum pathways can be found:

<https://www.birchwoodschool.co.uk/curriculum-pathways>

Reading across our pathways will have similar themes throughout, as we work towards a Total Communication Environment to assist our students to understand and communicate to the best of their abilities, based on the approach that is most suitable for them. Across each curriculum pathway, in every class, reading opportunities are carefully structured, embedded and clearly timetabled via discreet sessions such as My Communication, Phonics or Reading. Thanks to our Total Communication Environment approach pupils are immersed in rich reading and communication opportunities every day. Each student has daily access to a minimum of 20 minutes of discreet sessions of My Communication, Reading or Phonics.

Our pupils in EYFS do not follow a pathway, instead for their first year at Birch Wood, we spend time getting to know them and their communication and interaction needs. We offer a bespoke curriculum, centred on the Communication and Language and Literacy Early Learning Goals as well as the characteristics of effective learning. By doing this we are able to incorporate appropriate elements from each curriculum pathway and with teacher's observations and professional judgement find the pathway that is right for them in KS1.

At Birch Wood school we celebrate not only the individual progress our young people make with their reading, but also the joy of reading and storytelling itself. For our pupils on the Engagement and Independence Pathway this happens during our weekly virtual assemblies, where we recognise our young people's achievements and share reading based sessions together such as sensory stories based on that week's theme. On the Aspire Pathway we celebrate each time a young person reads something to an adult, by signing a special bookmark and then entering them into a prize draw. This could be reading a book or

anything in their environment, such as leaflets, menus or instructions for a new game. Another way that we celebrate our love of reading is through participating in events such as World Book Day and National Storytelling Week. During these celebrations all pupils participate in highly motivating activities to promote a love of reading and make stories come to life. This could involve daily whole school story massage sessions via Teams, large scale sensory story sessions in the hall, staff reading different genres of stories aloud to pupils and theme days where pupils get to dress up as their favourite story characters and share their favourite books.

Home support

We recognise the vital role parents play in helping us to deliver reading, communication and phonics at Birch Wood. By sharing banded Collins books linked with young person's reading age (based on accelerated reader assessment), RWI books shared in line with their phonics level as well as sensory story boxes and library books at home, parents can help to develop and rehearse pupil's decoding, reading skills and phonological awareness. To aid parents in doing this, we deliver flexible training sessions at different times of the day, both in person and remotely via Teams. For example, phonics training for parents gives valuable insights into what phonics will look like for their child, according to their curriculum pathway as well as giving examples of resources and activities to help support this at home.

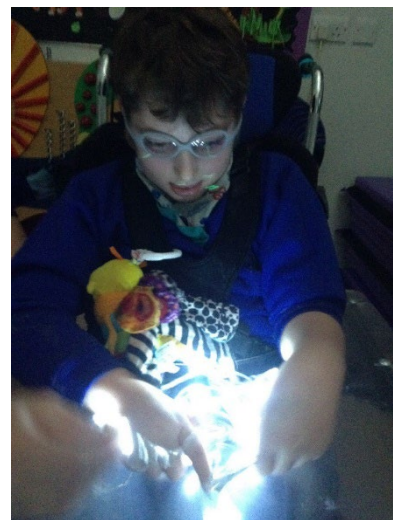
Community

Our commitment to reading extends to our school's local community. We have linked up with local businesses such as March House Farm and Melton's Regal Cinema to create a more inclusive total communication environment which will be more accessible for young people with SEND. By helping these businesses to utilise symbols within their environment we are ensuring that young people with additional needs can be as independent as possible.

Our approach ensures that reading will look different for each individual and below, is a summary of what reading looks like on each of our three pathways:

1) Engagement Pathway

We want our pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex additional needs to experience the joy of reading through immersive and high quality multi-sensory experiences. Within the Engagement Pathway, our pupils will access reading during sessions such as sensory stories, story massage, Dance Massage, Write Dance and multi-sensory drama activities.



Sensory stories sessions create an inclusive opportunity for our young people to be able to access and engage with reading through not just text, but via the vehicle of sensory experiences. Sensory stories create an immersive experience, where pupils explore short engaging stories, through both spoken language and accompanying sensory stimulus. After each line of the story pupils are given sensory props to explore. These can be textures, sounds, tastes, smells, visual or even proprioceptive or vestibular stimulus. Pupils are given lots of time to process the information with the assistance of highly trained staff members, all familiar with the pupils' methods of communication. Faithful repetition of these sessions enables our pupils to consolidate their understanding of key language as well as building anticipation for the sensory stimulus e.g. the word “splash” and the water spray bottle.

Pupils who follow the Engagement Pathway curriculum, may have multi-sensory impairments, such as vision or hearing. This is why it is crucial that sessions utilise all of our pupils' senses, enabling us to find their preferred methods of communication. Every day, pupils take part in sessions where they decode sensory stimulus to find out what is happening next or what day of the week it is. These sessions are repeated daily through use of objects or reference/ personalised objects of reference, cue music, colours, smells, touch and tastes.



Many of our pupils with complex additional needs and visual impairment rely on body signing. It is through a series of strokes and touch, accompanied by spoken words that pupils can decode and read what is going to happen next i.e. stroking a pupil's right arm to signal we are going to turn right at the end of the corridor. Repetition of such actions over time enable our young people to read and anticipate what will happen next, as well as to communicate if this is what they want, using their chosen method of communication.



It is essential that our pupils can find their own ways to communicate choices and to make their wants and needs known to us. Through the use of objects, photographs and symbols, our pupils can learn to decode the world around them and make choices using their own unique methods of communication; whether that is vocalisations, Makaton, eye pointing, gesture or facial expression. Utilising these reading and decoding skills can build to using more complex methods of communication such as communication boards, E-Tran frames, Eye Gaze software and other augmented and alternative communication devices.



One of the most important methods we use to further develop communication skills for our pupils on the Engagement Pathway, is Intensive Interaction. Whilst taking part in Intensive Interaction, the pupil always takes the lead, with staff members joining in with the behaviour of the child. This could include copying movements and vocalisations whilst giving the pupil time to respond. These interactions could be close in proximity, or with a lot of space in between. They could be active and noisy, or calm and quiet. It all really depends on the pupil. Through Intensive Interaction we learn about eye contact, turn taking, call and response, cause and effect as well as the joy of interacting with others. Intensive interaction is about creating a desire for the pupil to communicate with other, to find their own way to express their wants and needs through vocalisations, signs, gestures and eye movements.

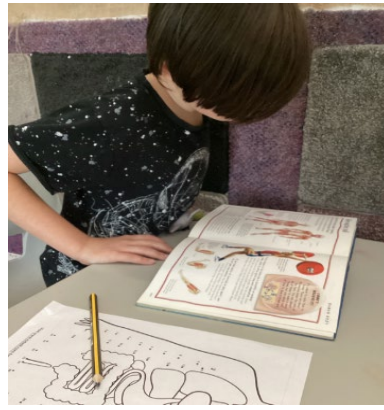


2) **Independence Pathway**

Birch Wood School fosters a total communication environment and as such, pupils following the Independence pathway will communicate using methods such as speech, Makaton signing, augmentative and alternative devices (AACs) and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). All pupils' voices and communication systems are valid and celebrated. Staff are highly trained in supporting the development of all of these communication methods, with the support of our Communication Lead and Speech and Language Therapists (SALT).



Pupils are immersed in reading opportunities, in every aspect of the curriculum, throughout the school day. From English and literacy sessions, where fiction and non-fiction texts are shared, to reading opportunities in subjects such as maths and science. Pupils have their own reading and library books, which they can read alone, or share with an adult in school and at home. Pupils are encouraged to access books that excite and motivate them, igniting that joy of reading.



Pupils on the independence pathway also have access to sensory stories which allows them to engage with reading using sensory experience. Sensory stories on the independence pathway allow students to develop their comprehension of the story, as each line of the story has something tangible that the students can explore. These can be textures, sounds, tastes, smells, visual or even proprioceptive or vestibular stimulus. Sensory Stories support students to develop their understanding of key language as repetition of these sessions help consolidate understanding as well as linking key words with a tangible sensory experience for example, the word “wind” and the hair dryer.



Weekly adult led reading sessions support students on the independence pathway to engage with different stories whilst skills of reading are being modelled by an adult. Students can begin to learn important reading skills such as reading from left to right, turning the page and reading the left page before the right page during these sessions.

The use of phonics is incredibly important to our young people accessing the Independence pathway. Using the 'Read Write Inc' system, pupils work through the different levels, learning different phonemes and identifying their corresponding graphemes. Students have access to learn the 44 common sounds in the English language and how to sound-blend words for reading (decoding) at the same time as developing handwriting skills and spelling (encoding). Through this system pupils learn to segment and blend words aiding their reading of the texts in their environment. Students on the independence pathway have daily access to phonics materials. The key principles of phonics are used to support learning across the curriculum. Within sensory exploration we used sensory stimulus to encourage students to engage with different sounds.



It is important for our student on the independence to have access to different sensory exploration linked to stories, reading and communication. This supports our students on this pathway to not only increase their understanding but to also develop a love of reading!

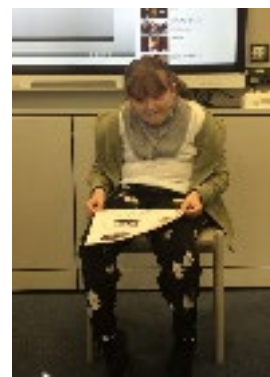


Students on the independence pathway have access to colour semantics. Our colourful semantics programme supports students to develop their grammar. Colourful semantics cuts sentences into their thematic roles then codes these roles using colours.

- WHO – Orange
- WHAT DOING – Yellow
- WHAT – Green
- WHERE – Blue

This approach supports some students to make longer sentences, use wider vocabulary, answer questions or generate responses to questions, use of nouns, verbs, prepositions and adjectives, retell the story and transfer the information into written sentences.

An important part of reading and communication on the Independence Pathway is story sharing sessions. These sessions follow a structured format enabling students to develop an understanding of narrative. The key distinguishing features of Story Sharing are: Stories are of personal experience, told orally (that is face to face, dynamically), Supporting the child as the teller and a Collaborative social model of story.



Pupil's reading is also developed through modifying and simplifying texts and the use of Makaton symbols, using the software Communication In Print. Through the use of these symbols, pupils learn to recognise key words. This is particularly useful for words that cannot be broken down or blended phonetically. Staff listen to students read throughout the week to track and record the student's current reading ability. The use of reading records, banded reading books and banding reading questions are used to enable students to access learning materials at the appropriate reading level.

3) Aspire Pathway

At Birch Wood, we feel it is imperative to provide young people with the opportunity to read, and learn to read, at every stage of education. On the Aspire Pathway there are many ways which we engage our students in reading.

We create a language-rich environment that is sensitive to the needs of the individual, utilising our total communication approach to allow all our students on the Aspire Pathway to communicate in a way that is appropriate for them.

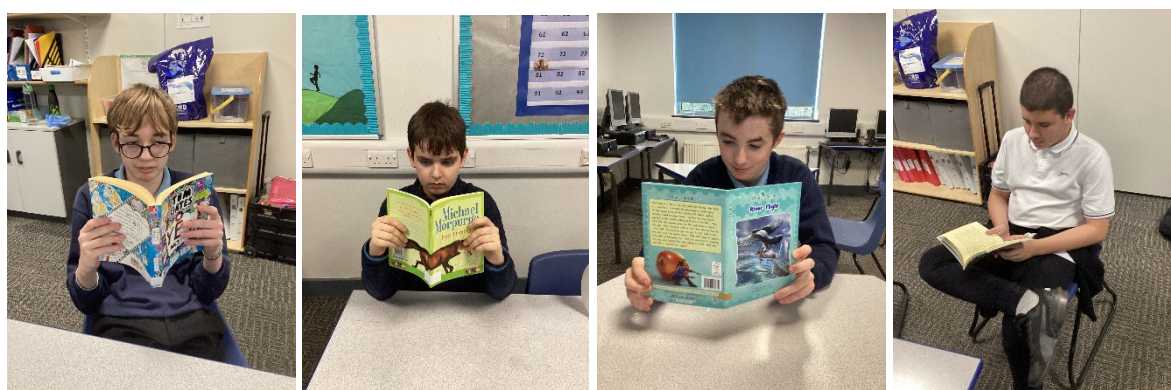
On the Aspire Pathway early readers access phonics, using the 'Read Write Inc' system, pupils work through the different levels, learning different phonemes and identifying their corresponding graphemes. Students have access to learn the 44 common sounds in the English language and how to sound-blend words for reading (decoding) at the same time as developing handwriting skills and spelling (encoding). Through this system pupils learn to segment and blend words aiding their reading of the texts in their environment. On the Aspire Pathway we also use RWI Fresh Start Phonics to support young people with reading accurately and fluently and provide them with the skills to develop good comprehension, spelling and punctuation through specific activities. At BWV and Ashton House, each student has 20 minutes of specific timetabled time to focus on reading, to develop on their fluency and comprehension as well as developing a love of learning to read. Reading intervention time is also specifically embedded into lessons within classes where it is appropriate.

Students on the Aspire Pathway are immersed in reading opportunities, in every aspect of the curriculum, throughout the school day. From English language and English Literature, where fiction and non-fiction texts are shared and discussed, to reading opportunities in

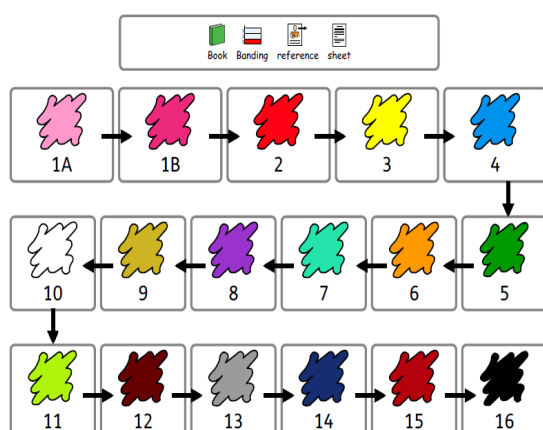
other subject specific lessons. We will specifically focus on the learning of key subject terminology.

Student's reading is assessed on the aspire pathway by the students using the accelerated reader system. Students then access books that are appropriate for them, linked to their reading age. Student's understanding of what they have read is then assessed using the accelerate reader system. The student's reading age is assessed termly.

Structured reading time is developed into the daily curriculum for those on the Aspire Pathway to assess their current reading ability. During this time students will read their own reading books which are appropriate for their reading level. Pupils have their own reading and library books, which they can read alone, or share with an adult in school and at home. Pupils are encouraged to access books that excite and motivate them, igniting that joy of reading. As well as reading books, pupils can engage in guided reading, games, vocabulary and spellings. These opportunities provide opportunities for developing and broadening comprehension.



Staff listen to students read throughout the week to track and record students reading level. Depending on the student's needs, the use of reading records, banded reading books and banding reading questions are used to enable students to access learning materials at the appropriate reading level.



My Reading Record					
Name:			Class:		
Date	Band	Book	Pages	Comments	Adult initials




Guided reading is an important part of reading on the Aspire Pathway, as it supports each reader's development of understanding and processing information from new texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty. During guided reading, students individually read a text that has been selected at their instructional reading level. Through guided reading,

students learn how to engage in every facet of the reading process and apply that literacy power to all instructional contexts. Students are encouraged to use their background knowledge and existing vocabulary to support their comprehension.

Teacher led reading sessions are included throughout the curriculum to support students on the Aspire pathway to engage with different texts such as news and non-fiction. Teacher led reading enables students to develop reading skills such as decoding words, reading punctuation and intonation of voice, through staff modelling. Students will learn through asking questions and using background knowledge for comprehension to allow the fluency of speech.

Reading Progress and Assessment

At Birch Wood School, reading and communication progress is monitored and assessed at three intervals during the year and this is linked to the student's curriculum pathway:

		
Engagement	Independence	Aspire
MAPP2	Bridge	Mastery
Each student will have a communication learning intention, which is rooted to their EHCP Outcome. These are evaluated against the four areas of the 'Continuum of Skill Development' (CSD) to ensure that students are able to maintain purposeful communication skills.	Each student will have a communication Bridge target, which is linked to students' EHCP Outcome. Students will also have a subject specific target linked to their Literacy curriculum, which will be aimed at further improving their reading and communication outcomes.	Each student on the Aspire pathway will be accessing subject specific learning, so they will be assessed via a linear model to ensure that they are suitably challenged and develop their reading and comprehension skills.

All of the above assessments are evidenced on Kinteract, which is a digital learning platform that helps teachers to track and share a pupils' achievements with parents/carers and colleagues.

Reading age assessments are completed for all students on the aspire pathway, which supports teachers in establishing reading texts for students and to ensure that students are suitably challenged, in order to develop their fluency and comprehension.

Where appropriate, statutory assessments are completed by students to assess students reading. These include key stage 1 and 2 SATS assessments. Students also take part in KS1 phonics screening assessments where appropriate. Statutory assessments also include Entry Level 1,2 and 4 and GCSE Language and GCSE Literature which will be accessed by those students where it is appropriate.

Students on the Independence and Aspire pathways have reading records to track and record their reading level, enabling staff to provide learning materials at the appropriate reading level for each student.

References

- DfE, 2021 - [The reading framework: Teaching the foundations of literacy](#)
- [EEF Literacy Guidance Reports](#)
- Oxford School Improvement: [Building an outstanding reading school: Six strategies for making reading for pleasure work in your school](#)
 - Birch Wood School Reading Assessment training - PowerPoint slides 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 120
- Joanna Grace – [Sensory Stories for Children and Teens with Special Educational Needs](#)
- Dr. Nicola Grove - [Storytelling, Special Needs and Disabilities: Practical Approaches for Children and Adults](#)