



Transitions from Phonics to Comprehension - A focus on fluency



Why, What, When and How?

As a reading school, we are always looking for ways to get better and better at teaching reading but also instilling a love of reading. Post-COVID, we identified fluency as a priority for our school. As a result, our whole staff received training from our Trust English Leader on Reading Fluency using the HFL Fluency project and the work of Tim Rasinski. We introduced fluency intervention groups for all pupils below the expected level and began to embed fluency teaching within our daily whole class reading lessons in KS2. Building on the strength of this work and the impact we were seeing in KS2 from our fluency work at the start of Autumn 2023 we decided to look at the transition from decoding through phonics to fluency and comprehension particularly in the transition from KS1 to KS2. Therefore we introduced the RWI comprehension programme as the transition between RWI phonics and KS2 whole class reading teaching. We chose this for the following reasons:

- RWI comprehension closely matches the expectations and routines of RWI phonics, reducing the cognitive load for pupils which would be created by transitioning to a new approach. A consistent approach means we are focussing the power of children's thinking brains on the skills of reading – not on routines and expectations.
- RWI comprehension focusses on building fluency with longer and progressively more complex texts than those used at the end of the RW phonics programme, ensuring the transition between programmes is neither too challenging nor too simple. We call this a Goldilocks transition as the level of challenge in the texts is 'just right'.
- RWI comprehension has both fiction and non-fiction texts in every unit so pupils are building their reading miles as well as their knowledge and experience of different genres of texts in preparation for the broad variety of texts they will continue to explore in KS2.
- The Teacher 'Read aloud' section of each lessons helps to build fluency through modelling by an 'expert' reader.
- Targeted questioning planned throughout each lesson helps pupils to build strong mental models of what they read over increasingly complex and lengthy texts.
- Decoding practice of unfamiliar words helps to build automaticity – a key part of fluency.
- Vocabulary exploration helps to expose pupils to new vocabulary in a meaningful context which helps to build a schema around new language.
- Grammar and punctuation development are also supported through the modules.
- Planned partner work and oracy opportunities allow cognitive capacity to focus on reading skills rather than writing skills so cognitive demand is targeted at the focus skills for the lesson.

We believe that using RWI Comprehension as a bridge between our Phonic and Comprehension provision will improve standards in Reading in KS2 through supporting in fluency development which is foundational for strong comprehension skills when reading.

In addition to this focus on fluency, we introduce the Comprehension Crushers Curriculum to KS2, alongside our existing successful and research-informed 'Just Read' scheme as it has a large focus on fluency based on the work of Tim Rasinski and the Herts for Learning fluency project. We chose comprehension crusher's because it aligned closely with our existing successful provision and was based on the work of Tim Rasinski and Chris Such. We chose to move at this time due to teacher's moving year groups alongside a wider curriculum change which required our existing texts changing to enhance our wider curriculum. This scheme delivered the research-informed principles we wanted (fluency instruction, pre-teaching of vocab, automaticity development and explicit reading skills teaching through complete texts rather than extracts). We felt this scheme aligned with the requirements of the Reading Framework and recommendations from the OFSTED subject review for English, whilst also reducing workload and being considerate of wider curriculum changes and connections. We use this alongside the 'Just Read' approach recommended by Mary Myatt and the University of Sussex based on extensive evidence that 'Just Reading to pupils with focussed oracy outcomes improve reading comprehension dramatically. We replicated this research during our trial term in Year 3 in the summer of 2024 and have embedded both approaches ever since to improve fluency and comprehension.

