

The approach to reading material for schools using the Phonics International programme and the No Nonsense Phonics Skills (Raintree) series – by Debbie Hepplewhite 2020

Matched texts in the phonics programmes

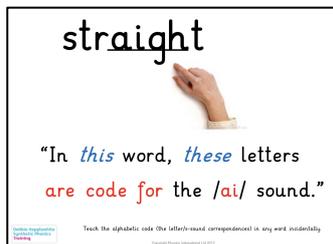
The *Phonics International* programme and the *No Nonsense Phonics Skills* series of 9 Pupil Books (of the suite of Phonics International) provide abundant cumulative, decodable sentences and texts for routine practice in the ‘teaching and learning cycle’. Children are not dependent on reading books to *apply and extend* their current and past alphabetic code knowledge and phonics skills.

Code in reading books lagging behind code introduced in school

For the purpose of independent reading at home – where children may be asked to have a go at reading ‘independently’ - it may be advisable for the published reading books’ content to *lag behind* the alphabetic code (the letter/s-sound correspondences) introduced systematically in the phonics programme/s.

Awareness of not encouraging word-guessing for teaching staff *and* parents/carers

Any quality books can be used with children as long as the supporting adults know not to teach, or encourage, or cause by default, the children to read new printed words through the ‘searchlights’ multi-cueing word-guessing (that is, don’t encourage or teach the guessing of new printed words from picture cues, or context cues such as ‘read on and go back, what word would make sense’, and initial letter/s, guessing). Tell children the words they are struggling with if necessary, or provide the code within the new words to enable the children to have a go at decoding them.



Children should not have to ‘lift the words off the page’ through guesswork – but the children will find the pictures and context can help them to understand the ‘meaning’ of new words. They will need to be able to decode and *pronounce* the new words, however, in order to add them to their *spoken* language. Supporting adults can help with this as necessary.

Sharing the phonics programme’s matched texts via the school’s book-bag routine

The guidance underpinning Debbie’s phonics programmes promotes a *book-bag routine* whereby each child’s phonics folder with up to date, cumulative alphabetic code content going back and forth to the home. Children *repeat-reading* word banks and cumulative texts of the core phonics material at home is encouraged; and parents/carers are fully informed about the programme and practice via the school’s information events and via the content shared back and forth in the book-bag routine:

https://phonicsinternational.com/Setting_up_the_phonics_folder.pdf

The *No Nonsense Phonics Skills* series consists of 9 ready-made Pupil Book which include cumulative, decodable ‘Mini Stories’ (selected from the Phonics International programme) to match the letter/s-sound correspondences introduced throughout the series. These Pupil Books can also go backwards and forwards to home to keep parents and carers informed, and for children to revise the content. Reading books from various publishers can be included in the home-reading routine – organised to lag behind the code introduced in the programme or selected carefully for any children who are exceptional readers.

No Nonsense Phonics Skills information and training page including video and PowerPoints (one including audio):

<https://phonicsintervention.org/no-nonsense-phonics-skills/>

Use of overview Alphabetic Code Charts in school and at home to support incidental phonics teaching

The fundamental underpinning rationale of *Phonics International* and the *No Nonsense Phonics Skills* series is the ‘two-pronged systematic and incidental phonics teaching’ approach. This means that teaching, or using, new code *beyond* the systematic, planned introduction of letter/s-sound correspondences is included in the approach. Teaching staff and parents/carers know they can address any code in new printed words to read, or words required for writing, at any time, without this being

problematic. Children are made aware of the notion of *spelling alternatives* and *pronunciation alternatives* from the outset of planned phonics teaching – supported by the use of overview Alphabetic Code Charts beginning in Reception:

https://phonicsinternational.com/Debbie_RRF_Two_pronged_handout.pdf

Teaching staff know how to vary their support for individual children's needs when using literature that is high-quality, part of the wider curriculum and wider reading experience, but beyond the children's code knowledge. The adults support as necessary – for example, read to the children, share with the children, point out new code as and when appropriate. This means no children need to be precluded from access to literature for the class topic (for example), for their intellectual understanding of the content in the books, and how the different types of books 'work' (fiction, non-fiction, anthologies, various genre).

Early readers may need reading material beyond matched texts at least some of the time

Precocious early readers should not have to be given reading books that are only fully in line with the phonics programme. Some children are better served by following the phonics programme very much with comprehensive coverage of the alphabetic code in mind for *spelling* purposes in their case, whilst they may need more challenging reading books for their individual *reading* capabilities. An example of this would be a child like 'Alice' as described in this document (see page 2):

https://phonicsinternational.com/Debbies_Phonics_Teaching_Tips.pdf

Use of labelling and bookmarks to guide parents/carers

When schools wish to share a variety of books with 'home' that may not always be fully decodable for the children to read *independently* (beginners and strugglers), then it would be helpful to stick labels on the books, or provide bookmarks providing guidance with the individual child in mind (which is a more flexible approach), to give the parents/carers a steer in how to use the book. The labels or bookmarks, for example, could state, 'Read to me' or 'Share with me' – or whatever is appropriate for the particular books for the individual child who will be taking them home. This will help to support a rich book culture at school and in the home but ensure that children aren't expected to read books aloud by themselves when they can't fully decode the range of words in the books – and also will ensure that very able readers are not unduly restricted in their reading material.

Organising the books in 'chunks' behind the code introduced in class

Generally speaking, organise decodable books for home-reading in 'chunks' (that is, according to a group of letter/s-sound correspondences introduced, not every correspondence introduced one by one) and lagging behind the letter/s-sound correspondences introduced in the phonics programme in the class or group lessons.

Cascading the books with matched texts

Another consideration regarding reading material with 'matched texts' in mind, is the impracticality and expense of the school providing 30 copies of every single title in a reading series on the basis that every child will require the same title at the same time with the same code. When the children are truly 'beginners', provide those children in the class who are more competent at sounding out and blending with the books first, then cascade the books to other children as they begin to decode more competently and independently. This means that for some children, by the time they get certain reading books, their code knowledge in that book may lag behind the 'current' code introduced in school but they will be more automatic and competent applying the code in the books for home-reading that they know very well.

Aim to provide variety of literature from different published schemes

It is also a good idea not to restrict the stock of reading material to only one publisher or series. 'Variety is the spice of life' so, over time if necessary, aim to build up a wider range of series which may be easier to organize if the *chunking and lagging behind* the alphabetic code approach is adopted.

Debbie Hepplewhite MBE FRSA

Author of *Phonics International* and the *No Nonsense Phonics Skills series (Raintree)*

Phonics consultant and co-author of the *Oxford Reading Tree Floppy's Phonics* programme (for which the advice for organizing reading books is the same as above!)

Any questions, contact: debbie@phonicsinternational.com

Debbie's comprehensive self-study course £20: <https://phonicstrainingonline.com>