



Reading Comprehension: Approaches to Teaching Key Skills and Strategies

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Progression in objectives and approaches to teaching skills in comprehension

Introduction

This policy is written for staff delivering the English Reading Curriculum at Ferryhill Station Primary School.

We understand that if children are to develop as independent readers who are able to comprehend what they read, they need to be taught comprehension skills systematically. Progression involves children using these skills and strategies with greater independence and confidence, without explicit reminders about what to do.

We want our children to know what sort of reading strategy to apply to the particular reading task in which they are engaged. This applies to all texts throughout the curriculum.

Covered in this policy are progression in objectives and approaches to teaching the following key skills:

- *Activating prior knowledge to support understanding p.3
- *Checking that books make sense p.4
- *Making predictions p.5
- *Ask questions p.6
- *Skimming, scanning and close reading p.7
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Activating prior knowledge to support understanding

Why?

- An essential check when retrieving information from a text: Is this sensible?
- Supports the process of inferring from a text, where the reader needs to fill the gaps between what is read and what is implied: reading between the lines.

Progression	
Year 1	Think about what they know about events/ topics prior to reading.
Year 2	Link the topic/ event from a text to own experience and/ or information they know. Recognise how book is similar to others they may have read.
Year 3	Link the events/ topic from a text to their own experience and/ or information they have gathered. Begin to make links to similar books they have read.
Year 4	Link what they've read in a text to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what they know • their experience and that of others • their experience of reading similar texts.
Year 5	Use background knowledge/ information about the topic or text type to establish expectations about a text. Compare what is read to what was expected.
Year 6	Comment on what they have read and compare this to what they are expected to read, eg. in relation to events, ideas, etc. Make comparisons between a text and others they have read.

Activating prior knowledge should be the starting point for all reading lessons.

How?

- Begin reading by discussing what is already known about a topic/ event.
- Encourage children to make links between their reading and their own experience.
- Consider what might be expected after reading other similar texts.
- Use prior knowledge to predict and speculate. However, prediction may need to be modified whilst/ after reading).
- When reading non-fiction, discussing prior knowledge should lead into identifying questions that the children need answering.
- Ask children to discuss how their prior knowledge was useful (or not) as they read through the text.

Checking that books make sense

Why?

Good readers make sense checks at regular intervals and they expect a text to make sense to them. They stop if they feel they have lost understanding and take action to remedy this. We need to encourage children to identify where they have lost meaning and know what to do about this.

Progression	
Year 1	Listen to their own reading, and that of others, and make a sense check at regular intervals.
Year 2	Check that a text makes sense to them as they read, pausing when reading to check their understanding, and, re-reading to regain understanding.
Year 3	Use contextual and grammatical knowledge, as well as background knowledge and understanding of word meanings, to make sense of what they have read. Put into their own words their understanding of what they have read.
Year 4	Monitor their understanding of a text and take steps to retrieve the meaning if understanding has been lost.
Year 5	Develop an active attitude towards reading: seeking answers, anticipating events, empathising with characters and imagining events that are described.
Year 6	Link parts of a text together in order to understand how details or specific sections support a main idea/ point. Accept uncertainty about the ideas described in a text where the author is deliberately obscuring the meaning.

How?

- Emphasise to children how important it is to understand and not simply skim over aspects of a text if it is not understood.
- Model how to read texts in short sections so that children learn to stop and check their understanding.
- Encourage children to identify and ask questions about parts they don't understand. Model doing this and taking action to develop understanding.
- Slow down reading, building in a pause when reading so that children have the opportunity to discuss a meaning that they find difficult to grasp.
- Model putting a text's meaning into your own words and ask children to do the same.
- Discuss fix-it strategies to deal with misunderstandings, such as clarifying word meanings.

Making predictions**Why?**

Making predictions is an important inference skill- speculating about a text that has not yet been read.

Progression	
Year 1	Make predictions based on clues such as pictures and titles.
Year 2	Use immediate clues and knowledge from what they have already read to make predictions about what is going to happen or what they will find out.
Year 3	Update and modify predications about events, characters or ideas in a text on a regular basis.
Year 4	Make predictions about a text based on prior knowledge of the topic, event or type of text. Modify predictions as they read on.
Year 5	Make regular and increasingly plausible predictions as they read, modifying their ideas as they read the next part of the text.
Year 6	Make plausible predictions and explain what they are basing these on. Discuss how and why they need to modify their predictions as they read on.

How?

- Stop regularly as you read a text to enable children to think about what they've just read and to make predictions. Give children the opportunity to modify their predictions in the light of new events and information.
- Predictions are based on prior experience, knowledge of the text type and what has just been read. Encourage children to use these sources of information when making predictions.
- Show that good predictions are based on text clues, such as titles, opening sentences, etc. they are not just 'wild guesses.'
- Emphasise the plausibility of predictions rather than expect them to be correct.
- When reading non-fiction, make use of sub headings, etc. to support predictions.
- Ask children to review their predictions, eg thinking about why their idea is no longer plausible or appropriate. Children can then see where texts have changed direction.

Asking Questions

Why?

Asking questions is a basic strategy for developing understanding- clearing up confusions about texts. It is important that children are provided with opportunities to ask their own questions, rather than always responding to teacher's pre-planned questions.

Progression	
Year 1	Ask questions about aspects of a text they don't understand.
Year 2	Ask questions about a text to ensure they don't understand events or ideas in a text.
Year 3	Ask questions to clarify the meaning of events or ideas introduced or explored in a text that they don't understand.
Year 4	Ask questions to explore meanings and explanations of the events or ideas introduced or developed in a text.
Year 5	Identify aspects of a text they are not clear about. Ask questions to clarify their understanding or research the topic to find out more.
Year 6	Identify where they do not fully understand a text. Ask effective questions that will help them clarify their understanding of the text or the topic they are researching.

How?

- Create the conditions where it is permissible to ask questions and should be encouraged to do so.
- Model different question types and stems. Encourage speculation.
- Ask inferential questions as well as retrieval questions.
- When a question is asked, encourage children to search the text to answer, ie. not to just 'remember.'
- Encourage children to reflect on the different sorts of questions that they ask and discuss what makes a good question.
- Ask children to reflect on the different sort of questions they could ask:
 - 'right here' questions- where the answer is directly stated
 - 'think about' questions- where the answer is implied
 - 'look for links' question- where children need to link pieces of information from across the text
 - 'find out' questions- these can't be answered from the text itself but need them to do more reading about the topic.

Skimming, scanning and reading closely

Why?

These skills are important in finding out information and answering questions on any type of text. Children should be taught how to use these and not just 'remember' information in a text.

Skimming: getting an overview of a text by reading key signposts which indicate meaning, such as the heading, sub titles, captions, labels and looking at photographs and illustrations, reading the first sentence in each paragraph in a narrative.

Scanning: reading down a text to locate a specific word or phrase in it

Close reading: reading the identified section of a text slowly and carefully to find specific information or to collect 'evidence'.

Progression	
Year 1	Skim read to gain an overview of a page/ text by focusing on significant parts- names, captions and titles. Scan the text to locate specific information, using titles and labels.
Year 2	Speculate about the meaning of the section or page by skim reading the title, contents page, sub headings and looking at illustrations. Scan pages to find specific information, using key words or phrases and headings. Read sections of text more carefully to answer a specific question.
Year 3	Skim opening sentences of each paragraph to get an overview of a page or section of text. Scan contents, indexes and pages to locate specific information accurately. Identify sections of a text that they need to read carefully in order to find specific information or to answer a question.
Year 4	Skim read a text to get an overview of it, scan for key words, phrases and headings. Decide which sections of text to read more carefully for a particular purpose, eg to summarise a text.
Year 5	Locate information accurately through skimming to gain an overall sense of the text. Scan a text to gain specific information. Use the skills of skimming and scanning to identify sections of text to read more carefully and re-read/ read on as appropriate.
Year 6	Evaluate the value of a text for an identified purpose, drawing on information acquired by skimming and scanning. Read sections of texts carefully to research information and to answer questions.

Skimming, scanning and reading closely**How?**

- Teach children to locate the specific section of the text and then read around the key word, by re-reading the sentence before it, the sentence containing it and the sentence after it.
- Model and demonstrate the different processes of skimming, scanning and close reading in shared reading and ask children to apply them in guided reading.
- Use opportunities when reading in topic lessons to demonstrate skimming, scanning and close reading.
- Show how to apply these skills as part of the process of answering comprehension questions.

Inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words

Progression	
Year 1	Speculate about the possible meanings of unfamiliar words met in reading. Check whether the suggested meanings make sense in the context of the text.
Year 2	Learn how to find the meaning of an unfamiliar word where this is explained in preceding or subsequent sentences or in a glossary. Check whether a suggested meaning of an unfamiliar word makes sense in the context of the passage.
Year 3	Practise re-reading a sentence and reading on in order to locate or infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. Discuss unfamiliar words and their possible meaning to clarify their understanding of a sentence or passage.
Year 4	Identify unfamiliar vocabulary in a text and adopt appropriate strategies to locate or infer the meaning, for instance: re-reading adjacent sentences/paragraphs to find an explanation or develop an inference; by identifying root words and derivatives; by using context and syntax; or, by using aids such as glossaries or dictionaries. Identify where an explanation for unfamiliar words cannot be gained from the text and where a dictionary needs to be used to achieve understanding.
Year 5	Identify when they do not understand vocabulary used in a text and hence need to clarify meaning. Give increasingly precise explanations of word meanings that fit with the context of what they are reading. Check the plausibility and accuracy of their explanation of the word meaning.
Year 6	Check the plausibility and accuracy of their explanation of- or inference about- a word meaning. Identify when they do not understand the vocabulary used in a text and apply strategies, such as re-reading, reading on, using context, using knowledge of root words to clarify the meaning.

How?

- Teach children to use the context to speculate about the meaning of the unknown word and check the plausibility of their guess.
- Annotate a text to identify unfamiliar words so they can consider meanings later.
- Show children how to use the information included in the text to understand the meaning of an unfamiliar word, eg. by re-reading a sentence or reading on to where the word is re-used or explained.
- Demonstrate how to make use of a glossary to explain technical vocabulary
- Recognise where a word is not explained by the context and that using a dictionary is the best course of action.
- Ensure new words learnt through reading are used frequently in class so that they become part of children's working vocabulary.
- Find ways to focus on and celebrate new words- word walls, word(s) of the week, etc. Highlight new and/ or interesting vocabulary.

Visualising understanding of what is read

Why?

Visualising is an important element in understanding texts and helps children understand inferences. Using illustration to reflect information in a text is also helpful in encouraging retrieval of details.

Progression	
Year 1	Visualise what they have been reading through drawing and acting out.
Year 2	Use illustrations and simple formats such as flow charts and diagrams to present and explain a process or series of events.
Year 3	Present information gathered from a text as a picture or graphic, perhaps labelling it with material from the text.
Year 4	Visualise information they have read about, eg by mapping, illustrating, making graphs, and, acting out. Use information from the text to justify their visual representations.
Year 5	Present information from a text graphically. Comment on illustrations and graphic representations they encounter in texts, linking their comments back to the text.
Year 6	Present information from a text graphically. Comment on the illustrations and graphic representations they encounter in texts, linking their comments back to the text.

How?

- Talk to children about ‘picturing’ scenes and events in their minds.
- Encourage children to compare their idea about a character or event with the illustrations in a text.
- Use information in a text as the basis for a drawing, diagram or graphic representation. Add labels, using direct quotation or paraphrasing from the text.
- Act out and freeze frame scenes from a text.
- Follow up children’s illustrations and representations by asking them to locate evidence in the text to explain and justify what they have done.
- Use visualisation to support retrieval, eg map making, and inference, such as creating an ‘emotions map.’

Summarising understanding

Why?

Summaries enable children to put their understanding into their own words and begin to distinguish between key and less important information.

Progression	
Year 1	
Year 2	Re-tell a story, giving the main events. Re-tell some important information they've found out about the text. Draw together information from across a number of sentences to sum up what is known about a character, event or idea.
Year 3	Re-tell main points of a story in sequence. Identify a few key points from across a non-fiction passage.
Year 4	Summarise a sentence or paragraphs by identifying the most important elements. Make brief summaries at regular intervals when reading, picking up clues and hints and well as directly stated information.
Year 5	Make regular, brief summaries of what they've read, identifying the key points. Summarise a complete short text or substantial section of text. Summarise what is known about a character, event or topic, explain any inferences and opinions by reference to the text.
Year 6	Make regular, brief summaries of what they've read, linking their summary to previous predictions. Challenge their ideas in light of what they read. Summarise 'evidence' from across a text to explain events/ ideas. Summarise their current understanding about a text at regular intervals.

How?

- Summaries do not need to involve large sections of text. A small amount of text and often is best.
- Use over-detailed recounts (perhaps based on children's work) as a starting point for oral recounts.
- Emphasise the value of topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs.
- Set challenges, eg 'summarise a section in 3 sentences' as an aid to constructing effective summaries.
- Ask children to explain why a particular piece of information is 'key' to understanding.
- Challenge children when summaries miss out important information.

Adapting reading strategies**Why?**

Children need to learn to apply the appropriate strategy for their purpose.

Progression	
Year 1	Listen to their own reading, and that of others, and make a sense check at regular intervals, re-reading where necessary to regain understanding.
Year 2	Stop and think about what they have read. Put what they've read into their own words.
Year 3	Identify where they don't understand, stop reading and take action to fix the problem.
Year 4	Adapt reading strategies to the different types of texts read, including IT texts, and different purposes for reading. Take steps to re-establish understanding when comprehension is lost.
Year 5	Apply the range of strategies to different reading tasks, eg skimming to gain an overview, close reading and re-reading to elucidate the meaning of a poem, etc.
Year 6	Make sensible decisions in order to read effectively for a specific purpose, eg. knowing when it is useful to gain an overview of a text, or identify which parts of a text needs to be read more carefully to find particular information.

How?

- Teach children to adapt their reading strategies for their purpose.
- Model different reading strategies in order to show children how to overcome a difficulty in a text, or to decide whether a non-fiction text is appropriate for a purpose.
- Identify the strategies they are going to use prior to reading, linked to the purpose of reading, eg:
 - skim reading the contents of an information book and scanning for key words to check if a text will be useful for their research.
 - reading the blurb and first chapter to see if a book is of interest to read.
- Discuss the strategies they plan to use when reading in order to encourage self-awareness when reading.
- Discuss the most efficient approach to use for a particular task.