

SPECIALIST EDUCATION SERVICES

Phonics Teaching Overview

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1 OVERVIEW

This policy outlines the teaching and learning of phonics at Turnstone House and Avocet House. It reflects the expectations of the Department for Education and supports the aims of the National Curriculum.

We are committed to ensuring that all young people become confident, fluent readers through high-quality systematic synthetic phonics teaching.

That Reading Thing (TRT) is a linguistic phonics reading method created just for teens and adults.

It is evidence based built on the core principles of linguistic phonics (speech to print, structured linguistic literacy), and the work of Professor Diane McGuinness.

It is externally evaluated by Greg Brooks, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Sheffield and supported by the science of reading (SOR). Cognitive neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene describes reading as 'essentially creating an interface between vision and the spoken language system' and this is what TRT strives to do in every level and activity.

TRT is not for young children. It is carefully structured for older students to work from sound to print using age-appropriate vocabulary and authentic reading material. However, for a student who feels they don't belong in education, age-appropriate is more than the look and feel of a literacy programme. They also need safety, pace and agency.

- **Safety** - The Deal means a shame-free experience for anyone used to feeling embarrassed by their reading.
- **Pace** - The tightly structured content means a student can keep moving forward while still practicing something that tripped them up at an earlier level.
- **Agency** - Students can self-assess and be involved in pacing their lessons. We always ask if they want to do a few more or if they feel like they've got it now.

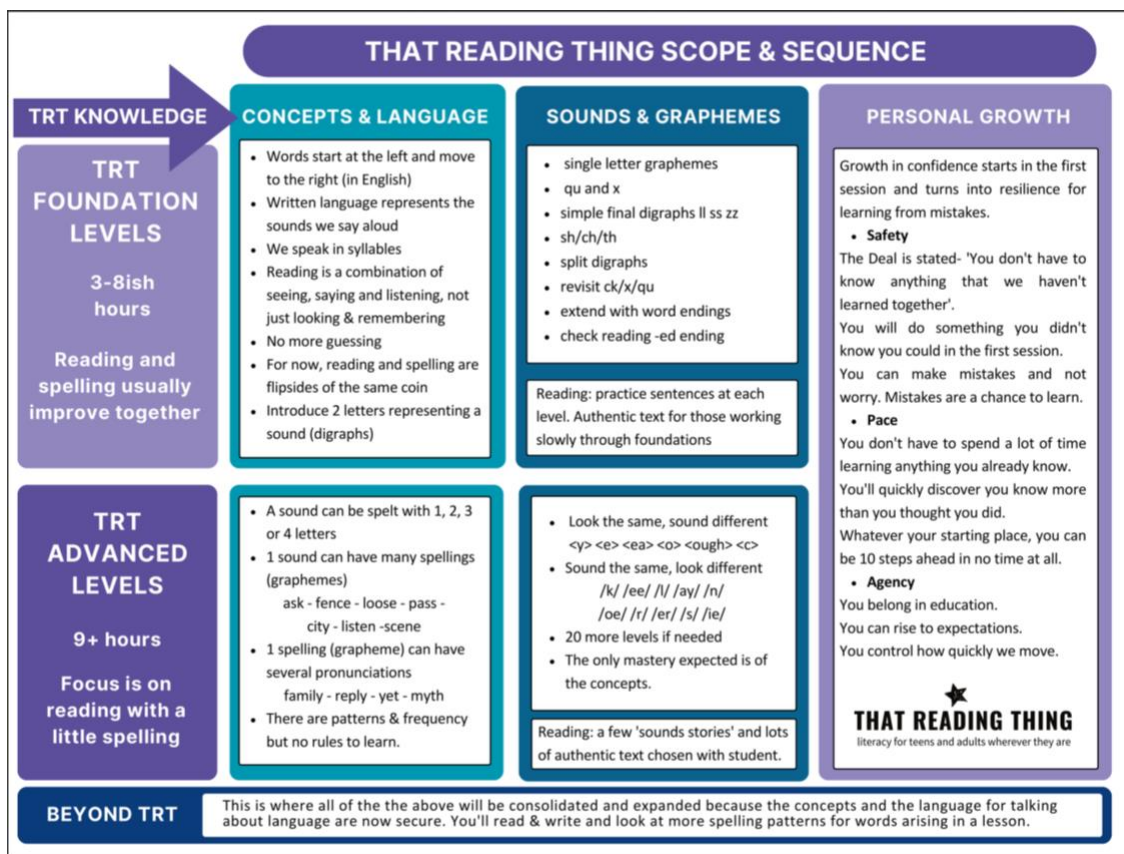
2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of That Reading Thing are:

- TRT students will learn how to attack unfamiliar long words both in and out of text.
- They will gain confidence reading any text on any subject.
- They will learn how to talk about words for reading and spelling (this is especially true of students who move onto That Spelling Thing).

3 TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACH

The teaching and learning approach of That Reading Thing is as follows.



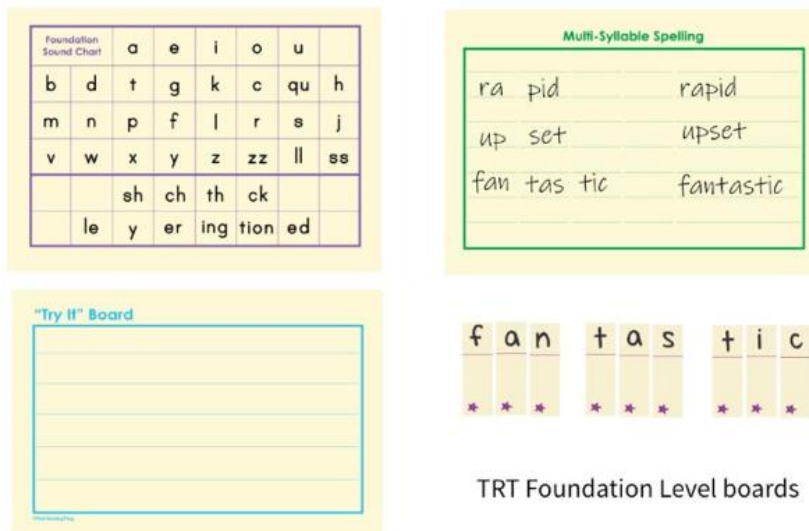
What happens in a That Reading Thing session?

There are 30 Levels in That Reading Thing followed by 20 Levels if needed. Every learner does every Level but works at their own pace because teens and adults struggle with reading for all sorts of reasons. This means that two people might be at Level 25 but one will be reading quite fluently and the other still reading slowly. However, both are successful because they're both many steps ahead of where they started.

Levels 1-13 – The Foundations

Level 1 is the TRT word reading assessment. It is essentially a decoding exercise of real but unfamiliar words which start at 'lot' and become increasingly complex. The first two pages have single syllable words comprised of basic code sounds with the gradual addition of sh, ch, th, ck and ng. The third page of the assessment has multi-syllable words, the last three of which represent the advanced code. It's very common for our learners to refuse to try any of the long words.

For the rest of the Foundation Levels (2 – 13) learners are building, reading and spelling words out of context and then reading them in text. Building is simply spelling with visual clues available – a “sound chart” for single syllable words and puzzle pieces for multi-syllable words. Multi-syllable words appear in the first 20 minutes of the first lesson and learners are spelling ‘fantastic’ by the end of that first session. All work is done on custom dry erase boards so mistakes disappear easily and completely.



In any one TRT Foundation session, the learner reads, writes on the TRT boards, says sounds, moves sounds around and reads and discusses sentences. They might read small amounts of authentic text depending on need at this stage. In all those activities they are learning an automatic thought process for dealing with unfamiliar words. They are also having conversations about all sorts of topics which is key to developing both vocabulary and social skills.

The goal is to move from reading and spelling words like 'sap' and 'fax' - words they've never seen before – to reading and spelling 'instructions' and 'conditioning' in 3 to 5 hours. This is possible because we continue to limit the code while introducing endings. We also apply **The Deal** throughout every lesson which means the learner never has to know anything that we haven't done together – nothing. It's in this environment of guaranteed safety that very reluctant learners start to re-envision themselves as belonging in education. They also discover that mistakes are fine – an opportunity to learn rather than a source of shame.

By the end of the Foundation Levels, the learner has developed confidence in word attack and is learning to track through long words from left to right and to actually read what's in the middle rather than guessing badly. They're learning to check meaning from context in sentences (note that this is different from creating meaning from context in sentences.)

The Advanced Levels 14-30

From Level 14 to 30, the learner discovers both the complexity and the logic of the rest of the code. They are no longer intimidated by long words and they're in the process of learning that reading right through an unfamiliar word is better than guessing when it comes to reading for meaning. With this in mind, they discover that a letter or group of letters can Look the Same but Sound Different (sunny, try, yet, myth) and that one sound can have several spellings so they Sound the Same but Look Different (both, close, grow, coat, soul, toe, though).

Sound the Same, Look Different rain table same eight

c	k	ck	ch	cc
cat	sit	black	Chris	tobacco
catch	kitchen	quick	school	accomplish
medic	make	looking	mechanic	
connect	lake	jacket		
crash	thank	chicken		
fantastic	wrinkle	cricket		
mechanics	luck	kid		
fact	mistake			
crack	ink			
suspect				
scale				

Multi-Syllable Spelling

mis take	mistake
to bacc o	tobacco
mech an ic	mechanic

Look the Same, Sound Different
cap table father water

c			
cat	city		
class	memory		
fact	decade		
coffee	canon		
combine	canon		
console	canon		
sponsor	canon		
sponsor	canon		
offer	canon		
discover	canon		
resort	necessary		
regress	occlude		
factory			
electric			
concrete			
equivalent			

m e c h a n i c

TRT Advanced Level boards

They discover this about the English code by sorting words on TRT boards and seeing the patterns of spelling and pronunciation from most to least common. They are also still building with puzzles and spelling – though, from this stage, spelling comes on slower than reading because of the memory it demands.

At the Advanced Levels, reading becomes a much bigger part of the lesson. We encourage use of newspapers, magazines, short stories, non-fiction and even novels. The one requirement is that the reading material has to be something that the student wouldn't be embarrassed to be seen with.

If the student needs them, there are 20 more levels available at the tutor support site. However, by this point, most students need to be reading a great deal more and spending less time on TRT Levels.

4 SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF LESSONS

Foundation Levels: basic code plus sh/ch/th, split digraphs, endings & sentences

1. Assessment
2. cvc
3. cvcc
4. ccvc & beyond
5. sh ch th
6. split vowels
7. ck x qu
8. le
9. y
10. er
11. ing

12. tion
13. ed

Advanced Levels: sort by phoneme or grapheme & sound stories

14. <y> Several ways to pronounce a grapheme
15. 'k' Several ways to spell a sound
16. 'ee'
The Creep – sound story
17. <e>
18. 'l' ending
19. 'ay'
Friday Night Mates – sound story
20. <ea>
21. 'n'
22. 'oe'
23. <o>
Only Joking – sound story
24. <ough>
Tough Deal – sound story
25. 'r'
26. 'er' stressed - 'dessert'
27. 'er' unstressed - 'desert'
December Weather in America – sound story
28. 's'
29. <c>
30. 'ie'
Outdoor Activities in Lochaber – sound story

There are 20 more levels to dip into if appropriate.

5 PACE AND PROGRESSION

The tightly structured content means a student can keep moving forward while still practicing something that tripped them up at an earlier level.

The length of a TRT intervention depends on the reason a student is struggling.

- Plan on each student receiving a minimum of 12 hours, one-to-one, over 12 weeks and longer for those with speech and language, cognitive or other more complex difficulties.
- The 1 hour per week may be split into two or three sessions. The challenge of shorter sessions is finding enough time to read together. You can extend the length of sessions as students build stamina.
- The students who started furthest behind will probably still be reading one-to-one with a tutor even after finishing the TRT levels. A few hours of That Reading Thing will launch them into a new way of looking at words but it will not make up for years of not reading at all, so they will benefit from reading challenging text with support.

- A more confident student (one who feels safe and is unlikely to respond negatively to making an error), might be happy working with a few other TRT students. Work one-to-one until at least Level 16 to 18ish and allow the students some input into the decision to move to a group setting. In the group, they will continue with the TRT Advanced Levels and start to work more on spelling.
- The staff member who leads the 'Advanced Levels and Beyond' sessions will be confident using TRT and familiar with the strategies for making the most of memory in That Spelling Thing, including bundling by sounds, spelling and everyday morphology. TST is an approach rather than a programme so content for the 'Beyond' sessions will arise out of the writing needs of your students. That Spelling Thing (the book) is available from Amazon. It can be used alongside a writing programme if you choose to use one.

6 ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING

Key aspects of the TRT Assessment are:

- **Initial Diagnostic (Level 1):** A quick, 3-page decoding exercise assessing real but unfamiliar words, ranging from basic sounds (sh, ch, th, ck, ng) to complex, multi-syllable words.
- **Immediate Insight:** The test often reveals that learners can decode long words, breaking the habit of guessing or feeling ashamed of their skills.
- **Focus on Decoding:** It is not a comprehension test; it evaluates the ability to map sounds to print (grapheme-phoneme correspondences).
- **Progression:** Results dictate which of the 30 foundation levels (Levels 2–13) the learner starts at, with a focus on building, spelling, and reading words, often using dry-erase boards.
- **Shame-Free Approach:** Designed to be non-threatening, turning mistakes into learning moments to re-engage older students.

7 INCLUSION AND DIFFERENTIATION

- The pace of lessons is dictated by the needs of each student so it can accommodate the needs of almost any student.
- Dyslexic students may take longer to work through the programme than their non-dyslexic peers who have just missed learning to read. They will almost always need more work with That Spelling Thing.
- For students with almost no literacy experience there is TRT Basic which introduces the basic phonemes and graphemes and prepares students to work through the rest of the programme.
- Students with SEMH needs are especially successful at TRT because it is so safe and they have a say over how they progress through the levels. Some students like to do more practice than they need because they enjoy the feeling of success. Others like to go as fast as possible because they can sense their own progression.

8 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Phonics Lead is responsible for ensuring the consistent and effective implementation of the school's systematic synthetic phonics programme, That Reading Thing. They will deliver the programme, analyse assessment outcomes, provide coaching and professional development, and report on standards to senior leadership and the Principal.

The Senior Leadership Team ensures that phonics remains a priority within the learning centre development plan. They monitor pupil outcomes, allocate appropriate resources, and ensure statutory requirements are met.

The Principal monitor the effectiveness of phonics provision through data review and leadership reports and hold school leaders to account for pupil outcomes.