Phonics and Reading Schemes

At Mill Water School our goal is that every pupil who has the potential to learn to read and write should be given the opportunity to do so. In order to meet this goal, we have designed our own bespoke phonics programme.

We recognise that many of our pupils have one or more sensory deficits and this means that our phonics offering must utilise all sensory channels in order to maximise learning. Our programme is therefore multisensory, using four basic modalities: auditory, visual, oral kinaesthetic and manual kinaesthetic. Multisensory methods of teaching build a close association between what is seen in print, what is heard, what is felt in the mouth when a word is said aloud, and what is felt in the hand when a letter is written. The explicit linking from print to sound for reading, and from sound to print for spelling, makes knowledge secure and aids retention and retrieval. The routines ensure that the pupil learns each letter-sound link by looking at the letter, saying its sound and name, and writing the letter in cursive script (where this is possible).

The programme is structured and sequential, following a defined letter order which follows the frequency of letters in the English language. This gives the order in which the graphemes are introduced. Singles letter sound-symbol links are taught first, moving on to vowel and consonant digraphs.

Many of our pupils have short and long term memory issues. The programme is therefore cumulative - each new piece of learning is added to previous learning and is practised in a variety of ways. Reading games have been designed to provide opportunities for overlearning. There is frequent and continuous review of previous learning to aid generalisation and retention.

We use the following phonics based reading schemes to reinforce learning:

- Dandelion Launchers and Readers
- Moon Dogs Reading Scheme
- Totem and Talisman Reading Schemes
- Rescue Series Reading Scheme
- Alba Reading Scheme
- Magic Belt Reading Scheme
- Phonics Bug Reading Scheme
- Dockside Literacy Scheme
- Nessy Learning Programme (ICT based)