



## **Getting started: Assessment for Learning**

The *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme has Assessment for Learning at its core. We know that taking immediate action when we see a child struggle or misunderstand is what makes the difference. As Dylan William says: 'the shorter the time interval between eliciting the evidence and using it to improve instruction, the bigger the likely impact on learning.' (*Embedding Formative Assessment*, 2015)

We believe that great phonics teaching follows the cycle: teach, assess, do. We know that speed matters when young children are learning to read. We must assess and 'do' the right thing quickly. This is why we know that early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective Daily Keep-up support, is a vital component in ensuring that every child learns to read, regardless of background.

### **Organising your teaching and learning space**

Set up your classroom in a way that will maximise learning and opportunities to assess children throughout the lesson.

- Make sure you are sitting at the children's height, in a position where you can see every child's mouth, and every child can see your mouth. This is so you can be 100% sure that they are saying sounds correctly.
- Sit your focus children near you and/or near a teaching assistant. This way an adult can support them to stay focused and provide them with any scaffold they might need.
- Keep the area around your teaching space free of clutter so there is less to distract children and they can focus their attention on you.

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## Observe children during the lesson

What to look out for:

- **Children who struggle with concentration:** These children may need you to give them some prompts to stay focused on the lesson.
  - Say their name to remind them to listen.
  - Sit them close to you so you can keep them on track.
  - Give praise for paying attention and joining in.
  - Use another adult to help them stay on track.
  - Plan additional practice and consider pre-teaching so they gain confidence.
- **Echo children:** You may find that some children wait for their friends to speak then copy them. This is a sure sign that they are not secure.
  - Make sure they know the routines so they know what to do in each part of the lesson, and can fully participate and think about the learning.
  - Make sure they get extra practice and consider pre-teaching so they gain confidence.
  - Work with them after the lesson to determine what additional support they need and plan appropriate Daily Keep-up.
- **Fluent reading of words:** Watch the children carefully to ensure they are blending in their heads. (Children will often mouth the sounds to themselves at this stage.)
- **Tricky words:** Take note of the children who are not able to read the words with automaticity and provide additional support outside of the lesson. Refer to the guidance 'Providing repeated practice: Practice throughout the day'.
- **Spelling words:** Look out for children who struggle to write words. Support them to re-segment the word before they write it.
  - Ensure letter formation and handwriting are not a barrier to writing. Teach handwriting separately, using the formation phrases from the programme (see the 'Phase 2 Grapheme information sheet').
  - For children not yet writing, use magnetic letters or grapheme cards to spell words.
- **Writing sentences:** Check for children who struggle to recall and write a sentence. Ensure they have lots of practice saying the sentence before they have a go at writing it. The cognitive load of remembering the sentence, recalling letter formation, spelling each word and using correct punctuation is high. For some Reception children, you may wish to use the simplified sentences provided in the notes on the weekly grids.

- **Instant identification of digraphs and trigraphs:** Sometimes children cannot see the digraphs/trigraphs in words. This often happens when they are reading longer words.
  - Review the graphemes that the children are not 'seeing' in the word.
  - Flip the card and use the sound button side, then switch to the word-only side.
  - Ensure children get lots of practice identifying the digraphs before they read.
- **Phase 5 graphemes with more than one sound, e.g. 'ow' (grow and cow):**  
Misidentification of these GPCs is common when children first tackle them.
  - Ask the children to read the word with both possible pronunciations and discuss if they recognise a real word.
  - Use the sorting games to read and discuss the GPCs. Is there any pattern in the position of the GPC and its sound?
  - Ensure the children know what these words mean so that their vocabulary is not limiting their ability to read accurately.

### Using feedback to control the pace

Ensure that you are constantly gauging children's retention of learning. Use feedback to find out if they need more practice. Children need a great deal of repetition to move new learning into their long-term memories.

Gather feedback by:

- checking with the whole class
- choosing two children who are on track
- choosing two children who may need additional practice
- making a list of children who need instant Daily Keep-up in the afternoon. Use the 'Keep-up teacher's guide' to help you identify which specific steps need to be practised.

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## **Children with additional needs: an inclusive classroom**

- Ensure your mouth is visible at all times and that you are not covering it with resources, such as grapheme cards.
- Ensure children with hearing and vision impairments are close to you and have a clear view of all the resources. You may wish to use the adaptable resources and books available from RNIB Bookshare.
- If necessary, reduce teacher talk for children who need more time to process what you are saying.
- Use routines to lower cognitive load.
- Ensure the teaching area is uncluttered to minimise distractions and aid focus.
- Think about appropriate adjustments to ensure a child can be included in the lessons. Provide children with their own resources (enlarged, if appropriate), cushions to help with core stability, a writing slope to prop up books, etc.
- Provide Daily Keep-up outside of the lesson if required.
- If you have additional adults supporting in the lesson, ensure they are well trained and are clear about the content of the lesson and how to support children effectively.