

Do daily phonics interventions have an impact on improving blending accuracy in reading, and spelling accuracy in writing, across the curriculum for pupils below age related expectations?

Hoxton Garden School, KS1 Phase

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of daily phonics interventions for children below age related expectations. It was designed to examine how this would affect their blending accuracy in reading and spelling accuracy in writing. The children selected were below age expected from across KS1 (Year 1 and 2). The Year 1 cohort had reduced time in EYFS as a result of COVID 19 partial school closures. The Year 2 cohort lost face to face teaching for periods of Reception and Year 1. In Autumn 2020, research carried out by the Department for Education, the Education Policy Institute and Renaissance Learning, found a learning loss of up to 2 months in reading for primary school children as a result of the COVID 19 impact. A report published by the NFER stated *“the impact of lockdowns on the development of literacy skills at an early age is of particular concern”, as “early reading plays a key part in children’s later achievement”*.

In the current study, children received four, fifteen minute phonics interventions a week, in addition to their daily literacy and reading lessons. The effectiveness of the intervention was measured against their phonics screening scores, writing across the curriculum and book band level.

Introduction

Hoxton Garden Primary School is a multi-cultural primary school situated in the borough of Hackney, London. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic group and those who speak English as an additional language are higher than average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is higher than average and a significant number of pupils enter Nursery and Reception below the expected level for their age across several areas of learning. Pupils make strong progress in reading and achieve above national averages at the end of KS2. Due to the school closures during the pandemic, gaps emerged in learning, particularly in KS1. Blainey et al. (2021b), reported “that in Summer 2021 the widest disadvantage gap by year group was for Year

1 in reading". Ensuring these gaps are targeted for children below the age expected level is essential to ensure their KS2 literacy skills continue to enable a secondary readiness. The National Curriculum states *"it is essential that, by the end of their primary education, all pupils are able to read fluently, and with confidence, in any subject in their forthcoming secondary education"*.

The rationale behind this research was chosen in line with priorities on the 2021-22 school improvement plan. A key focus point at the start of the year was to identify pupils who require additional support with phonics and reading in EYFS, KS1 (particularly a Year 2 focus) and KS2 so that attainment is sustained above national averages.

Hoxton Garden follows the government published program 'Letters and Sounds' using resources from the 'Read Write Inc Programme'. The children are taught within the phase that is appropriate to their year group with intervention for those below age related attainment. They are assessed on a regular basis and groups are sorted accordingly. The phonemes (sounds) are systematically taught before the children are shown how to blend them for reading and segmenting them for writing. Alongside this the children are taught the 'high frequency words'. For reading, Year 1 pupils have daily supported reading sessions and Year 2 begin a transitional programme to Destination Reader, a focused reading programme which allows for discussion, analysis, and written responses to text. Secure phonetical knowledge is essential for fluency in reading. The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy, published by the Department of Education in January 2022 reinforce this through stating that *"children must first be able to accurately identify the words on the page or screen before they can bring meaning to what they are reading"*.

In EYFS, children are exposed to Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4 sounds, (see appendix 1). Phase 1 underpins children's development in speaking and listening skills. Phase 2 introduces simple letter sound correspondences and in Phase 3 children are introduced to consonant digraphs and long vowel sounds. Children consolidate this learning in Phase 4, at the end of Reception. In Phase 5, children learn new graphemes and alternative spellings for reading.

Nationally, pupils take the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, typically aged 6. Pupils who do not meet the expected standard take the check again at the end of Year 2, typically aged 7. Phonics screening checks are carried out at Hoxton Garden in Year 1 each term. At the second check, children have been exposed to all phases and therefore well placed to undertake the phonics check. After the first check in Autumn 1, children who were not secure in Phase 5 were identified and put into intervention groups. Children A-H were identified at stage. These children scored significantly below, (see figure 2). The children identified in Year 2 were below age expected in reading and writing and had not passed their phonics screening check in December 2021. Gap analysis after each check identified which sounds each child were not yet secure with. This information allowed the groups to be set up specifically based on their needs.

Research Process

The process was coordinated by the KS1 phase leader and Year 1 teachers. The phonics lead and SENCO carried out the Year 1 interventions and the Year 2 learning support assistant carried out the Year 2 interventions. Three focus groups were set up, based on the gaps identified from the baseline assessment. As previously mentioned, at the start of the research, the focus children took a phonics screening check for a clear indication of their needs and gaps, which would prove vital to the research outcomes. Book band data and tracking grids were also considered, alongside discussions with the Year 1 class teachers to gather and collate information on progress. After the research period, the children took part in the national phonics screening check and results were analysed for impact.

Using the assessment criteria discussed at the beginning of the interventions, children were organised into groups according to specific gaps. An OFSTED inspection carried out in 2008 on the evaluation of intervention programmes found that withdrawing groups for support was less effective when assessment information was not used effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills and the programmes selected did not match what pupils needed. Group 1 (child E, F, G, H) focused on Phase 3 sounds with an emphasis on modelling blending. Group 2 (child A, B, C, D) were targeted for Phase 5 sound recap with a strong focus on split digraphs.

Group 3 was made up of Year 2 children (child I, J, K, L) and they focused on Phase 5. The structure of each session was a 5 minute sound recap followed by 10 minutes of reading and writing of the focus sound, (see appendix 2). Regular meetings between the SENCO, phonics lead, phase leader and class teachers allowed opportunities to monitor progress and ensure each child was in the correct group for their current gaps.

Findings

Findings show there is a strong correlation between the interventions carried out and the progression made by the focus students. All children involved in the study moved up at least one book band, (see figure 1). Considerable progress was made by child B who moved from red to orange by the end of the research process.

Name	Year	Baseline	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Child A	1	Purple	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Blue	Green	Green
Child B	1	Purple	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Green	Orange
Child C	1	Red	Red	Yellow	Blue	Blue	Green	Orange
Child D	1	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Blue	Green	Orange
Child E	1	White	White	White	Red	Red	Blue	Yellow
Child F	1	Purple	Purple	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Blue
Child G	1	Purple	Purple	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Child H	1	Purple	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Blue	Blue
Child I	2	Purple	Purple	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Green	Orange
Child J	2	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Green	Green
Child K	2	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Green	Green	Orange
Child L	2	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Green	Orange	Light Blue

Fig 1: reading tracker

The data collected for the Year 1 focus children demonstrated that 6 out of the 8 children passed their phonics screening test. For Year 2, 2 out of 4 children passed their re-sit test. All children made considerable progress in their assessment scores, (see figure 2). The Year 1 data moved from a 61% pass rate at the start of the research period to 85% after the check was complete, (see appendix 3).

Name	Year	31 Jan	21 Mar	6 June
Child A	1	16	28	39
Child B	1	16	30	40
Child C	1	20	27	38
Child D	1	23	29	33
Child E	1		9	37
Child F	1	18	31	34
Child G	1	1	3	15
Child H	1	2	15	25
Child I	2	4	16	32
Child J	2	8	20	29
Child K	2		10	19
Child L	2	12	22	34

Fig 2: phonics assessment results

When examining the writing samples taken from the children at the start of the study and the end, some children demonstrated more consistent application of their phonetical knowledge gained from the interventions. Due to the structure of the interventions being short and pacy, they predominately focused on reading accuracy. The interventions lead's fed back that the children were becoming more consistent with immediate recall as each session went on and that due to the time limit of 15 minutes. The children were less reliant on adult support and building on their previous knowledge gained from each session. It was evident that grouping children by gaps rather than overall ability was key to enabling rapid progress.

Child C and Child D from group 2, focusing on split sounds, showed good application of this area in their writing. However, Child A and Child B were not doing this with consistency and there is evidence that the sessions needed a quicker shift to wider application of knowledge in context to ensure the link between reading and writing was robust.

Further feedback from the leads also suggested that although the interventions were beneficial to pupil outcomes, they were resource heavy. Moving forward, a bank of phonics resources for these targeted interventions within the school would ease preparation for each session and allow them to remain consistent across each academic year.

Impact and conclusion

The findings show that daily, 15 minute phonics interventions have a positive impact and allowed rapid progress to be made in blending in reading for children below age expected expectations. Pupils' confidence grew within the interventions which impacted their contributions during whole class sessions. To ensure the interventions have a greater impact on spelling accuracy, moving forward, more time should be dedicated to writing a sentence to apply and spell the focused sound. All adults taking part in the research agreed that grouping children based on the gap analysis data was key to ensure the correct gaps were addressed.

References

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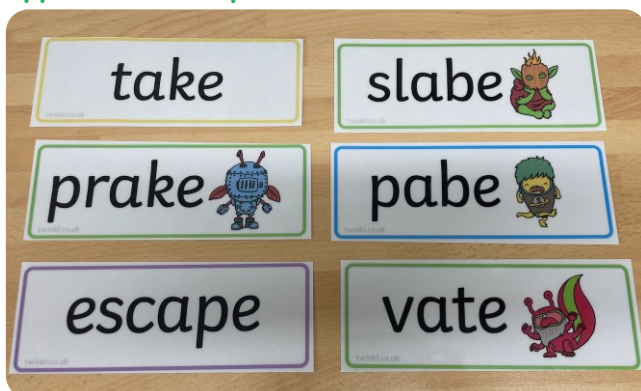
Appendix

Appendix 1: letters and sounds overview

Below is a chart showing the order that children will be taught the sounds

Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to and for sounds. Rhythm and rhyme Alliteration
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sounds taught: s, a, t, p, l, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, e, u, r, h, b, f, l, ll, ss Tricky words: the, to, go, no,
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sounds taught: j, v, w, x, y, z, zz, qu ch, sh, th, ng, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er Tricky words: no, go, l, the, to, he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, her, all, are
Phase 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap all previous sounds. Teach reading and spelling tricky words: said, so, he, we, me, be, have, like, some, come, was, you, were, little, one, they, all, are, do, when, out, what, my, her Read and write words with initial and/or final blends: st, nd, mp, nt, nk, ft, sk, lt, lp, tr, dr, gr, cr, br, fr, bl, fl, gl, pl, cl, sl, sp, st, tw, sm, nch, shr, str, thr
Phase 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn new phoneme zh Teach new graphemes for reading ay, ou, ie, ea, oy, ir, ue, aw, wh, ph, ew, oe, au, a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e Teach reading words oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, water, where, who, again, thought, through, work, mouse, many, laughed, because, different, any, eyes, friends, once, please. Teach spelling words said, so, have, like, some, were, there, oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked. Teach alternative spellings for ch, j, m, n, r, s, z, u, i, ear, ar, air, or, ur, oo, ai, ee, igh, oa, y/oo, oo, sh
Phase 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and apply suffixes – ed, ing, ful, est, er, ment, ness, en, s, es Understand the rules for adding ing, ed, er, est, ful, ly, y Investigate how adding suffixes and prefixes changes words Introduce the past tense
<p>Glossary. Phoneme- the smallest unit of speech-sounds which make up a word. Grapheme- the written representation of sounds. Tricky word- word which cant be sounded out Keywords- high frequency words vc word- vowel consonant word (it, as) cvc word- word made up of a consonant, vowel, consonant (cat, dog) Initial sound- first sound in word</p>	

Appendix 2: example of resources



Appendix 3: Year 1 phonics result

Spring 1					
Percentage on Track (National 83%)					
	Cohort Size	AAE (32+)	27+	25+	22+
All	44	61%	68%	75%	80%

Spring 2					
	Cohort Size	AAE (32+)	27+	25+	22+
All	44	75%	82%	82%	84%

Summer 2 2022 Phonics Screening Test					
Percentage on Track (National %)					
	Cohort Size	AAE (32+)	27+	25+	22+
All	46	85%	85%	87%	87%
Boys	25	84%	84%	86%	86%
Girls	46	86%	86%	86%	86%
Disad	46	81%	81%	81%	81%
EAL	46	75%	75%	75%	75%
SEND	46	71%	71%	71%	71%

Appendix 4: Year 1 reading tracking grids

Reading	Year 1 Class Tracking Sheet 2021-2022 Schools: Hoxton Garden, Teacher: LM/RA, Class: 1			
Year 1 Secure 60			Child C, D & B	
Year 1 Developing 50			Child A, H, F & E	
Year 1 Emerging 40			Child G	
Reception Secure 30	Child C, D, B & F	Child C, D, B, F & H		
Reception Developing				
Reception Emerging	Child A & H	Child G		
Significantly Below	Child G			
Term. Number in class:	Reception, Summer, Assessment	Autumn Class No: Average New Point Progress	Summer Class No: Average New Point Progress	Summer 2022 Prediction