

Reading

Our Reading Champions are: Mrs Pembery (Primary Phase) and Ms Youngman (Secondary Phase)

"No matter where they live or what their background, every single child in this country deserves the opportunity to read, to read widely, and to read well - it's a simple matter of social justice."

(Child Literacy Campaign 2015)

At Medeshamstede Academy we are passionate in our mission that every pupil becomes a proficient reader and develops a love of reading. Reading is integral to our curriculum and a lifelong skill that allows independent learning and develops a growth mindset. We use clear and consistent whole Academy approaches that support the learning characteristics of our pupils with autism in their development of reading skills.

Our Reading Intent

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of the verb 'read' is to *"Look at something written or printed and understand it or say it aloud."*

Medeshamstede Academy believes that reading goes far beyond the dictionary definition. We aim to teach pupils to respond to pictures, sounds, spoken and written words, and texts; to comprehend information and infer meaning from it. We want our pupils to be excited about the world that reading opens up as golden thread running throughout our curriculum. Book corners, our libraries and outdoor reading space create learning environments that promote enjoyment of books and reading.

Language and communication for our pupils starts with their ability to communicate, use functional language and understand that words carry meaning. All pupils are presented with many opportunities throughout the school day to read. Our adaptation of the four Cornerstones Curriculum to engage, innovate, develop and express through themed, termly imaginative learning projects encompasses meaningful key texts and book lists enabling a culture for a love of reading and a priority of our academy improvement plan.

At Medeshamstede Academy, we follow the progressive 'book band' scheme alongside the National Curriculum. Book bands ensure that reading books are correctly matched to the phonological reading level of the individual. The teaching of reading is progressive throughout Academy and children are provided with a variety of ways to acquire knowledge to know more and remember more.

Our Reading Implementation

In the context of our special school, reading skills and knowledge across the curriculum is supported through pedagogy and thinking aligned to the learning characteristics associated with autism. We aim to overcome barriers which can impact on the skills and knowledge that relate to reading. Therefore, our pedagogy addresses the characteristics of:

- **Social communication difficulties** (both receptive & expressive language that can impact on comprehension and inference skills)
- **Restricted or repetitive behaviours and interests** (time for reading is embedded into individual pupil schedules and a wide variety of genres encouraged)
- **Sensory processing** (difficulty filtering and modulating input - we provide quiet, distraction limited and inviting spaces to read)
- **Learning characteristics of autism impacting on reading:**
 - **Difficulty with implicit teaching** (individuals require explicit teaching of reading)
 - **Attention** (ability to 'lift and shift', ability to see the big picture, rather than details)
 - **Executive functioning** (explicit teaching of how to use and navigate books and other texts)
 - **Theory of mind** (teaching social thinking and the perspective of characters/others)

Based on current research and theory the term 'dyslexia' as a specific learning difficulty can be used interchangeably with literacy difficulties (reading/spelling difficulties) at the word level.

There are clear genetic and biological bases to autism. There are differences in the brain functioning of our neurodiverse pupils compared to their neurotypical peers. Some of our pupils will learn to read through the dual-route model, applying both phonological awareness and a memory store of whole words, recognised by sight. We recognise that some of our pupils may find the application of phonics difficult to master and the whole word route may be dominant for some pupils when learning to read.

We offer pupils a well- balanced diet of literacy activities for reading:

- Recognising that language development is vital to reading development and focus on vocabulary instruction
- Ensuring that phonemic awareness and phonics are taught explicitly and systematically
- 'Word study' approaches, particularly for those with literacy difficulties
- Teaching sight-vocabulary (to the point of fluency)
- Modelling, teaching and practice of reading comprehension strategies
- Meaningful reading and writing opportunities
- Encouraging fluent reading through shared and independent reading
- Ensuring that pupils have opportunities to read for pleasure in quiet, relaxing spaces
- Making sure pupils are reading at the 'Just-Right' level
- Ensuring access to a wide range of reading materials, across multiple genres

We use 'Pearson Online Bug Club' and 'Phonics Bug' to extend our reading offer so that reading can take place using IT and to support reading at home. We use a variety of book schemes including Read, Write Inc, Bug Club aligned to the Book Bands system.

We use targeted Reading support through 'Switch-On Reading' and 'Smart English'.

We run reading clubs to enrich our curriculum offer and support role play, interaction and conversation relating to the books being read. For example, the primary library champion, engaged pupils' interest in Harry Potter which led to a reading activity where children read how to perform spells with their training wands. Pupils also took part in dressing up to role play the 'Mad Hatters Tea party' after shared reading of Alice in Wonderland.

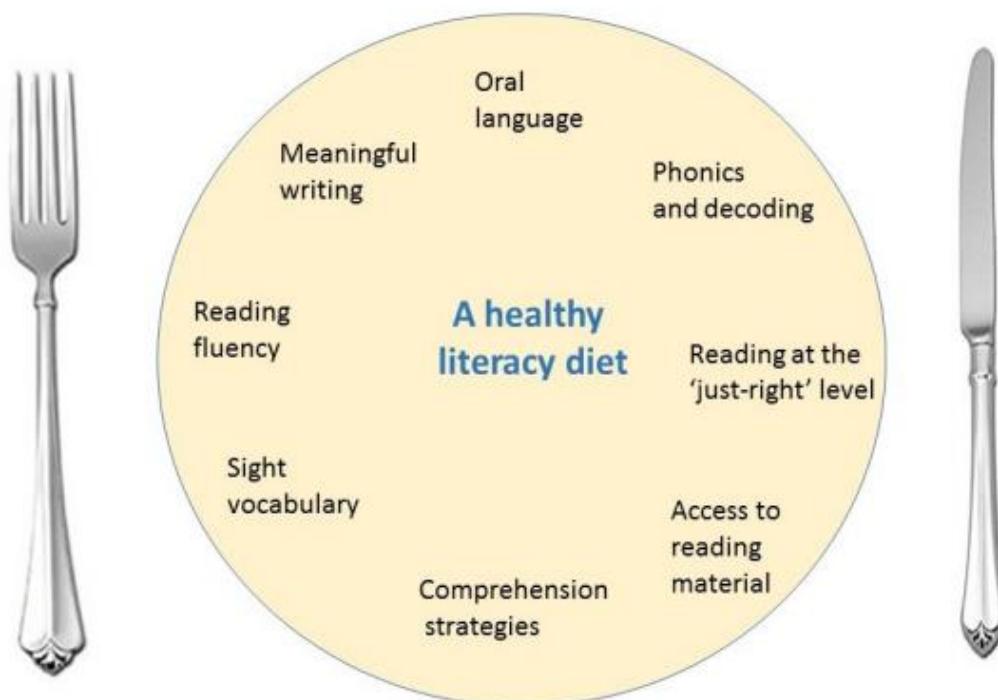
Pre-formal learners

We offer multi-sensory story time, through story sacks and sensory stories for pre-formal learners. 'Writing with Symbols' IT program is used by staff to illustrate key words in adapting texts to support visual learners when beginning to read. Symbols, along with the text, are read by pre-formal learners. Staff explicitly teach pre-formal learners how to hold a book, turn a page at a time, track the text and use illustrations to support making sense of texts. Reading opportunities extend to visual and multisensory representations through objects, pictures, symbols, words and 'Look and Listen' IT program (as part of Bug Club), listening to audio recordings and adults reading aloud.

Phonics is taught explicitly through Letters and Sounds (DfE) along with some aspects of Read, Write, Inc. across primary phase and through daily shared reading teaching in KS 1 and 2.

Reading is a high priority in our book-led English curriculum, where teachers plan comprehension to match the reading domains for each year group. Through high quality texts, we intend to develop a love of reading and allow children to recognise the pleasure they can gain from reading. With this we aim to provide children with the understanding that reading provides opportunities to discover new knowledge, revisit prior knowledge and understand more about what they learn.

The Healthy Literacy Diet



Colourful semantics is a UK research-based approach created by Alison Bryan, aimed at teaching the components of a sentence to semi-formal learners to develop their grammar. It is rooted in the meaning of words (semantics). Colourful semantics reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then colour codes them. It teaches learners to:

- Understand information and produce sentences.
- Communicate their own ideas effectively
- Develop competent use of simple and complex sentence structure
- Develop a concept of narrative (e.g. what makes up a 'story')
- Produce, read and write grammatically correct sentences (through modelling)

Level 1 – **Who?** "the boy" (Subject – Orange)

Level 2 – **What doing?** "is eating" (Verb – Yellow)

Level 3 – **What?** "burger" (Object – Green)

Level 4 – **Where?** "in McDonalds" (Location – Blue)

Level 5 – **Describe** "gigantic" (Adjective – Purple)

<http://integratedtreatmentservices.co.uk/our-approaches/speech-therapy-approaches/colourful-semantics-2/>



Think Social is a curriculum (by Michelle Garcia Winner) as research-based autism provision that enables us to help our pupils connect the '**what**' of social skills with the '**why**' of social relationships. These skills are the basis for higher level reading comprehension. Social thinking explicitly teaches essential reading comprehension skills to semi-formal and formal learners so that they can:

- Respond to who, what when, where and how questions
- Predict with pictures and context
- Make and confirm predictions about text by using prior knowledge and text ideas (illustrations, titles, topic, sentences, important words, foreshadowing cues)
- Retell familiar stories
- Distinguish and interpret words with multiple meanings
- Define figurative language and identify its use in literary works
- Distinguish the main idea and supporting details in expository (nonfiction/informational) text
- Retell central ideas of expository/narrative passage
- Ask clarifying questions about essential text elements of expositions (why, what, if how)
- Discern main ideas and concepts in texts, identifying and assessing important evidence
- Connect and clarify main ideas by identifying relationships to other sources/ topics
- Identify idioms/ analogies, metaphors in prose/poetry
- Distinguish between cause and effect and between fact and opinion and think critically
- Ask and answer questions about essential elements of text (comprehension)

Switch-on Reading is an intervention that aims to achieve functional literacy and close the reading achievement gap for vulnerable children working below age-expected levels.

Switch-on is a proven reading and writing intervention developed by Nottinghamshire Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders for underachieving, vulnerable pupils working below age related expectations in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, as well as special schools. It is inspired by the well-established

intervention 'Reading Recovery'. It is an intensive 10-week literacy intervention, delivered for 20 minutes daily on a 1:1 basis by staff, who have been trained in the approach.

Switch-on has been evaluated by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and key points noted were: "Pupils with low attainment prior to the intervention showed particularly positive results, making five additional months progress on average. Pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils identified as having special educational needs made four additional months progress on average. As such, this evaluation suggests that Switch-on can be an effective intervention for weaker and disadvantaged readers at the stage of transition to secondary school." <https://youtu.be/Vb7m5nH474g>

Corrective Reading is a programme for secondary pupils that builds on Switch-On reading intervention. It is well-liked by pupils, as it is fast-paced and every session follows the same format. It is taught individually or in small groups of the same reading ability. It teaches 'word-attack' skills as a decoding strategy and correct pronunciation of the word. Pupils practise identifying affixes and the sounds for letter combinations. Following word work, pupils move on to text level work covering variety of genres, whereby the pupil receives practice in reading connected sentences that are composed of words that have been pre-taught. Pupils are taught to read fluently, accurately and with expression and to develop reading comprehension skills. Each session includes composing and writing answers to reading comprehension questions which develops pupils' confidence to read and answer a broad variety of comprehension question-types, including literal comprehension, vocabulary, new information facts and inferential reading.

Our Reading Impact

We aim for children to have a love of Reading and make at least expected progress in reading from their last point of assessment and from a baseline reading assessment which is performed, along with a phonics screening test, at the beginning of each academic year or when pupils join the academy.

Children will use their Reading skills as a key tool in helping them to learn, and as a result, know more, remember more and understand more. We measure the effectiveness and impact of reading in a variety of different ways. Where appropriate, we use national and summative testing to assess pupils' outcomes as part of the Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs for Year 6 pupils). Teachers use formative assessment and summative assessments for formal learners to enable pupils' progress and attainment in the subject matter to be evaluated. The impact of reading can be seen through pupils' workbooks, pupil profiles, Records of Achievement, individual reading records and class displays. All pupils have a long-term outcome for reading as part of their school report for their Annual review.

Through lesson and pupils' book monitoring, it is evident that pupils are being well supported to acquire the necessary skills and subject knowledge in order to develop as confident readers. Learning visits demonstrate that learning is being broken down into smaller steps and modelling supports pupils in the reading process.

The impact of reading across the curriculum can also be measured through the acquisition of pupil voice and talking to the children about their own learning. Pupil voice indicates that the children are enjoying their learning and can talk about reading and curriculum opportunities.

How do Most Children Learn to Read?

- Early language and literacy (reading and writing) skills development begins in the first few years of life and are closely linked to the child's earliest experiences with language, books, stories and nursery rhymes
- Children usually begin to read with a whole word awareness of visual and spoken words (for example, recognising their name or a shop logo) and then tend to become aware of increasingly smaller units over time. Reading development is supported by exposure to print (regularly reading to children from a very early age, singing nursery rhymes) and vocabulary development (talking to your child).
- Being able to hear and identifying the different sounds in words (phonological awareness) is a key skill and predictor of later reading success. As children learn to read, phonological awareness is used to work out the relationships between parts of words and what they sound like (syllables, onset-rime, phonemes). They learn to pronounce and identify the whole word. This may occur through breaking down the sounds in words (decoding) or through other approaches such as recognising whole words or rhyme
- In order to begin to read fluently and efficiently in a way which allows for comprehension (understanding of what has been read), eventually words which have been decoded will need to move into memory so that they can be identified quickly by sight
- Skilled reading is a complex process and it is therefore not surprising that there is a great deal of individual variation in reading development

Source: Cambridgeshire Dyslexia Guidance (updated 2019)

Universal Support: An Autistic Friendly School

We recognise that teaching staff, as individuals, are key to the success of pupils overcoming their difficulties. The four key elements of good practice, identified in the Rose Report and OFSTED (2010) are:

- A whole school ethos that respects individuals' differences, maintains high expectations for all and promotes good communication between teachers, parents and pupils
- Knowledgeable and sensitive teachers who understand the processes of learning and the impact that specific difficulties can have on these
- Creative adaptations to classroom practice enabling children with special needs to learn inclusively and meaningfully, alongside their peers
- Access to additional learning programmes and resources to support development of key skills and strategies for independent learning