

Staff involved Deputy Headteacher Lindsey Moran, Subject Leader Leanne Quarry-Ellis and English Link Governor Lyn Eaton

Reason for visit This was the second visit of this academic year to check progress with teaching and learning in respect of English provision at Liscard; phonics teaching was a key focus for this visit.

Process There was an opportunity to visit some of the classes for the younger children where phonics teaching was in progress, while the uses of the Phonics Tracker were demonstrated.

Key points

- Phonics teaching is just one of the tools used to embed success in English at Liscard Primary; vocabulary learning, regular reading including paired reading and reading for pleasure are also important. When phonics is taught well a secure foundation for future learning is laid. Through engagement in well planned sessions that are engaging, fun, active, lively, multi-sensory and systematic the children learn the basics which are then skillfully contextualised and reinforced across the curriculum. This approach avoids the trap of 'synthetic phonics' which can fail some children where the phonics teaching is sterile and not linked to everyday contexts recognised by the children. Effective phonics teaching lays the foundation for reading for pleasure and other approaches including paired reading.
- Throughout the pandemic the delivery of phonics teaching and practice continued remotely, with the result that most children are on track to achieve their target level.
- As in many schools, a small number of the youngest children arrive at school with a deficit in respect of speech and language and this has to be addressed through carefully targeted interventions so that phonics teaching can then have the expected positive impact on their readiness for reading and subsequent access to the curriculum.
- The quality and consistency of the teaching is apparent in the classrooms which are clearly highly effective learning environments where the children clearly enjoy their phonics teaching, supported by workbooks/sheets and other resources that have been prepared by the staff and customised to the needs and interest of the children. As part of the application phase of the phonics lesson, children were enthusiastically engaged in activities and using resources that had been prepared for them about the Chinese New Year.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as a team and share resources. The distributed leadership model, that is a feature of this school results in staff taking more ownership of their teaching, while sharing resources and embedding good practice further facilitates effective teamwork that ultimately benefits the children. The general high calibre and flexibility of the teaching assistants has meant that they have been effectively deployed to cover some teacher absence, reducing the requirement for agency staff; this results in a more consistent and effective learning experience for the children.
- The behaviour for learning consistently displayed by all the children is something that should be celebrated; staff have clearly worked consistently and relentlessly to achieve this and it is not something that just happens.
- Senior staff continue to read with children who have been identified as requiring this form of support and despite many demands on their time this activity is prioritised.
- Some progress has been made with the re-establishment of parent/carer activities to support reading strategies and more will be done as the academic year progresses and parents and carers become more confident and willing to mix with others.
- When considering how children were identified for interventions/ extra support use of Phonics Tracker was demonstrated; this is an assessment and tracking program for phonics, high frequency words and phonics screening check. It simplifies the assessment of phonics by instantly recording whether a child can successfully pronounce the phoneme or word and saves on time consuming administration, allowing staff to focus on children's needs.

Next visit will be during the early part of term 3 and will include consideration of mid-year data.