

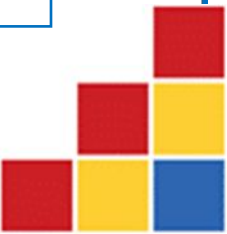
Reading at Step by Step School



Our ethos...

We strive to make reading, the love of books and stories **accessible to all**. It is valued, promoted and **actively encouraged**. This can be through many **experiences**, such as sharing the enjoyment of a book with another person, a story through sensory activities, actively engaging in learning to read or understanding that words and pictures are used to communicate.

Step by Step School **do not limit this experience based on cognitive ability** and all pupils are encouraged to engage with books and the wonder of storytelling, developing **positive experiences of reading** through their educational journey with us.



- Ensure all pupils have access to a **high quality teaching** that progresses systematically and is carefully structured with small and cumulative steps.
- This approach will be **evidence-based** that is both challenging and also motivating (promoting repetition, rhythm and rhyme and active engagement in storytelling).

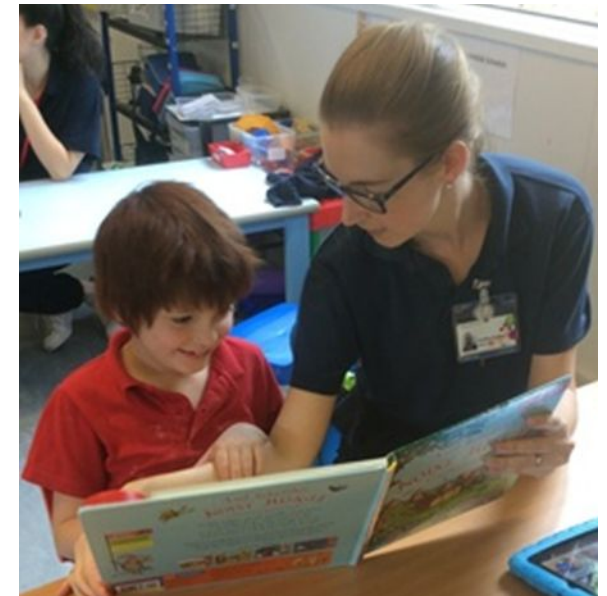
Reading: Intent



- Develop **symbolic understanding** that can be used in functional activities
- Provide our pupils with **a range of learning tools and reading materials**, which will enable them to become familiar with stories, become competent readers and who will read for enjoyment as well as for information.
- Develop word reading (**fluent and confident de-coding**) and higher reading skills such as reading for meaning (**comprehension**).



- Provide a **language-rich environment** for all pupils and support the development of communication skills via speech, voice output communication aids, signing and/or Picture Exchange Communication (PECs)
- Support the development of **appropriate listening skills** in both 1:1 and group settings.



Reading: Implementation

Step by Step's chosen phonics programme is



phonics.

In addition, to this, the school also use the online reading programmes



and



in order to provide a variety of resources and opportunities

for our pupils to access reading.



Reading: Implementation – Early Readers

Our early readers participate in a variety of activities and share experiences of books and story telling with others. Some examples of activities are:

- **Book browsing** - looking at books to become interested in reading.
- **Engaging with a book** – e.g. listening and engaging with a story being read to them for 30 seconds, and systematically increasing this time frame.
- **Building motivation for books** - by pairing them with other preferred items or activities (e.g. stories that include singing, or providing food reinforcement when the pupil engages with the book).
- **Learning to match pictures in a book** - to teach the pupil to attend to the page.



Reading: Implementation – Intermediate Readers

Examples of reading activities for intermediate readers are:



Reading Oxford Reading Tree books (Biff, Chip and Kipper series) – these gradually increase in difficulty throughout the series.

Sight word recognition – which pupils learn to recognise instantly and can read without needing to break the word down into individual letters or phonic blends. Knowing common sight words can make reading more fluent. Some pupils with ASC find it easier to learn sight words than to understand phonics instruction.

Matching pictures to words - in order to gain understanding that words relate to real items and concepts.



Reading: Implementation – Intermediate Readers

Examples of reading activities for intermediate readers are:



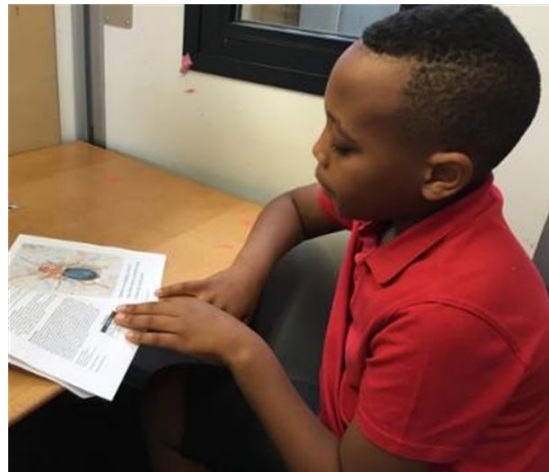
- **Headsprout Early Reading program** – an online reading program, with exercises and games to teach the basics of reading, phonics and ‘sounding out’.
- **Answering simple “wh” questions** (when, where, what, who comprehension skills)
- **Using books with repetition and rhyme to promote participation** - as the book progresses, the pupils may start to remember the phrases and rhymes and join in. Pupils who are non-verbal can also join in using signs, or using alternative communication systems such as Proloquo2Go.



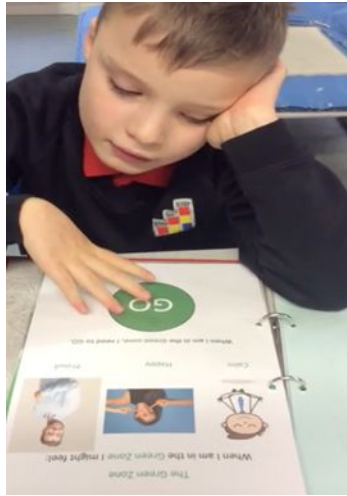
Reading: Implementation – Advanced Readers

Examples of reading activities for advanced readers are:

- [Headsprout Reading Comprehension](#) - pupils answer “wh” questions about the text, to develop their understanding and comprehension of what the text is conveying.
- [Reading more advanced texts](#) - for example non-fiction books.
- [Answering advanced “wh” questions](#) about various texts.
- [Reading information texts and online research](#) - for example, researching the Moon Landings online during history week, or reading a social story about what Autism is.
- [Peer mentoring](#) – such as reading to their peers.



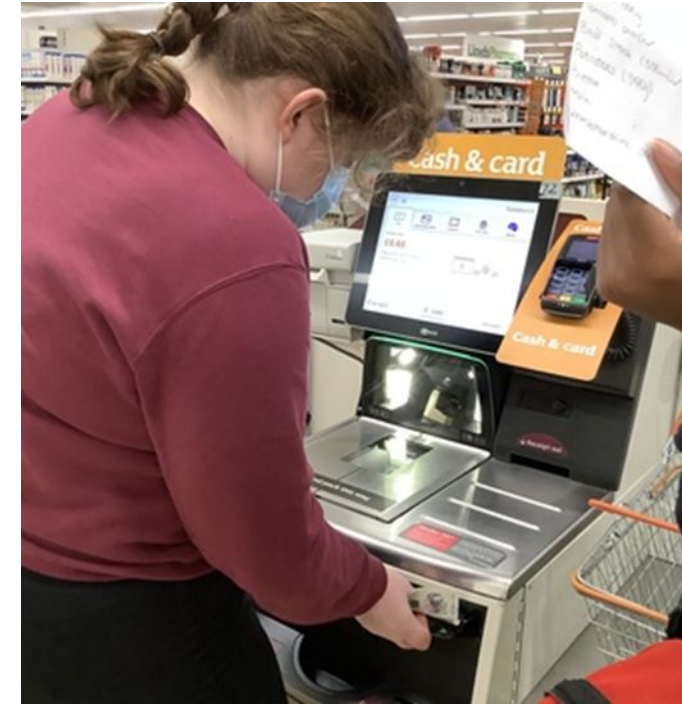
Reading to build independence



As well as being fun, reading is an important and functional skill for a variety of situations, such as reading and following instructions, directions, recipes etc.

Other types of activities include:

- reading instructions to create a Lego structure,
- reading instructions to complete worksheets,
- reading a social story about understanding and regulating their emotions,
- creating a shopping list to read and use on trips to the supermarket, and
- reading lyrics in order to sing a song in music sessions!



Building motivation to read

Learning to read is **fun** and **exciting**.

At Step by Step School, we prioritise making learning motivating for our pupils by creating individualised stories that are based around the pupils' interests and incorporating games and sensory activities into reading. Building motivation into reading also includes teaching pupils to identify and read motivational words.



A pupil is splatting foam on the letters corresponding to the sounds her tutor is saying.



A pupil is learning to read and recognise the names of items he finds motivating, such as "Pooh Bear" and "moon sand".

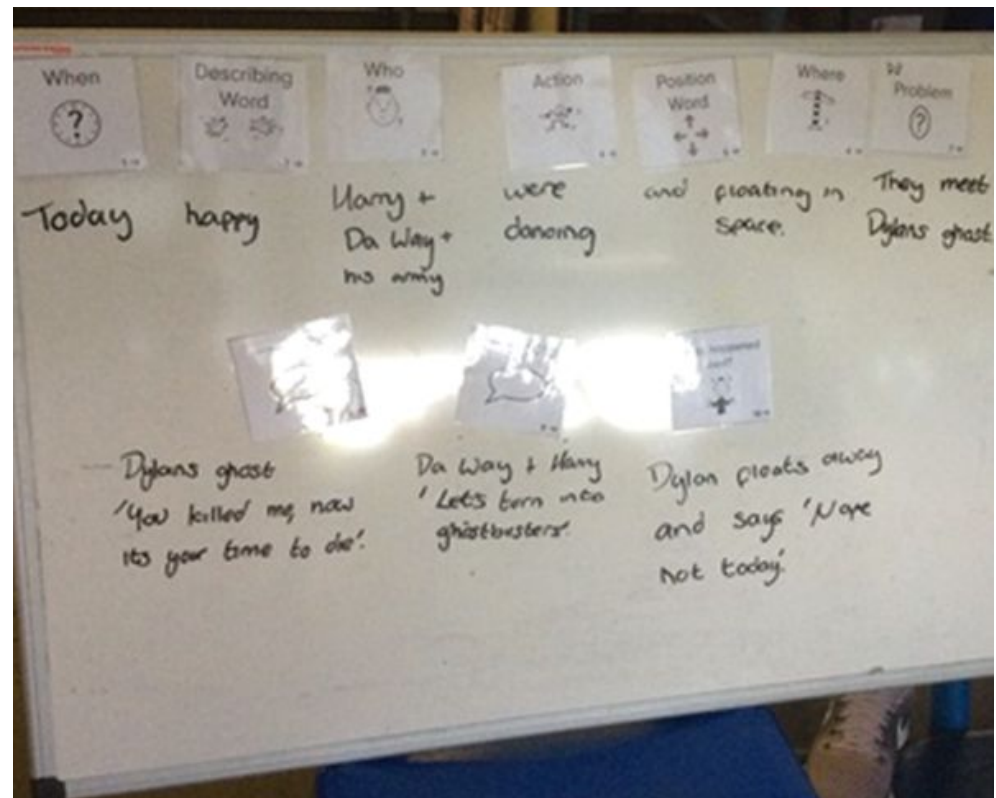


Building motivation to read

Some of our advanced learners have engaged in a game called “secret stories”.

Each child writes a sentence then folds the paper over; when the next person writes a sentence, it does not relate to the previous one. This results in a funny and silly story which the pupils find very amusing when read out!

Reading groups for advanced learners have also included pupils being presented with prompts such as “when”, “describing word”, “who”, “action word” and “what did they say”, and then being asked to contribute their own ideas to each section to create a story. This can also result in a very funny story when completed!



Building motivation to read

Another reading game that we like playing at Step by Step is “story strings group”.

A washing line is placed across the room with various pictures pegged onto it.

Each pupil is asked to contribute and make up part of the story based on that picture.

When the final story is read out, it’s silly and very funny - making the pupils laugh a lot!



Reading in curriculum groups



Twice a day our pupils are taught in small groups by one of our teachers. These cover English, Maths and Science, whilst also teaching topics from the National Curriculum - such as Space, Jobs, Health, Animal and Plant Life Cycles, Ocean Life and Geographical Locations.

These groups often focus on reading and include books relating to the topic. For example, "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" was used during the Animal and Plant Life Cycle topic, and a book about London was used during the UK topic.



Reading in curriculum groups



Pupils are often invited to read a sentence or page from the book. Early learners are regularly invited to press a button with speech output relating to the book.

These groups also include activities relating to the book, such as worksheets or arts and crafts, to further aid understanding of the book and the topic.

Often, the pupils even have the chance to role-play part of the story and dress up!



Sensory story groups



Another way reading is integrated into the pupils' learning at our school is the use of sensory stories.

Our pupils have varying levels of communication and understanding. Sensory stories are a way of ensuring all our pupils can engage with reading and stories in a way that is accessible to each one of them.

Sensory stories combine words and sensory experiences, including the five senses of touch, sound, sight, taste and smell, as well as proprioceptive and vestibular senses (relating to movement). Sensory stimulation is crucial for cognitive development and establishing neural pathways.



Sensory story groups

Sensory stories are fun and engaging for the learners, aiding understanding of the words within the story, where pictures may not be enough. They also encourage group and social skills.

Sensory stories are inclusive across all learners and allow learner participation.

Examples of sensory story groups used at Step by Step include:

“Jack and the Beanstalk” - pupils walked through green material, representing the beanstalk, to reach the land where the giant lives.

“The Tiger who Came to Tea” - pupils fed the tiger.

“We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” - resources such as water, paint, leaves and grass were used to give pupils the opportunity to walk through “thick oozy mud”, experience the “deep cold river” and “long wavy grass”.



Evidence Based Reading Interventions

Step by Step School believe it is important to implement evidence based practices. We are proud to have staff at Step by Step who have conducted research into reading interventions and have had their research published. These papers help to inform us of the most effective reading strategies.

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05217-z>

ORIGINAL PAPER



Model Teachers or Model Students? A Comparison of Video Modelling Interventions for Improving Reading Fluency and Comprehension in Children with Autism

Rachael Egarr¹ · Catherine Storey¹

Accepted: 22 July 2021
© The Author(s) 2021

Abstract

Video modelling (VM) interventions have been used to improve the fluency of individuals with learning disabilities and reading difficulties; this study aimed to replicate these findings with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students. Four children with ASD (aged between 8 and 15) experienced two VM interventions, across 10 sessions, during an alternating treatments design: VM using a teacher model, and feedforward video self-modelling (FFVSM) where the student acted as the model. For two participants, FFVSM was found to be an effective intervention but overall, results for both interventions were inconsistent with previous research. Talking Mats Interviews were used to include these individuals within the social validation process of behavioural research.

Keywords Fluency · Reading · Video modelling · Feedforward video self-modelling · Video self-modelling · Talking mats

For some pupils, Feedforward Video Self Modelling was found to be a successful intervention for increasing reading fluency.



Copyright © 2020 Division of International Special Education and Services
Vol. 23, No. 1 pp. 1–12

Teaching Children with Autism Reading Comprehension Skills using Online Reading Instruction: Preliminary Evaluation of Headsprout Reading Comprehension®

Corinna Grindle
Olivia Kurzeja
Emily Tyler
Maria Saville
J. Carl Hughes
Bangor University, UK

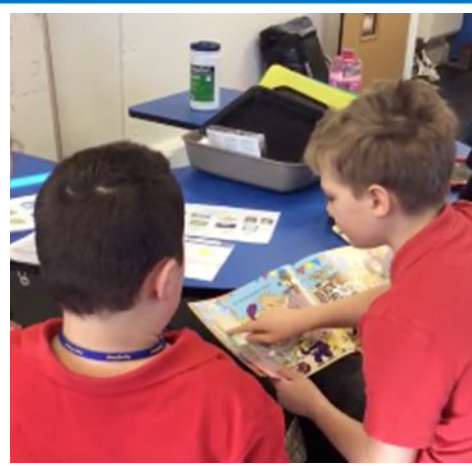
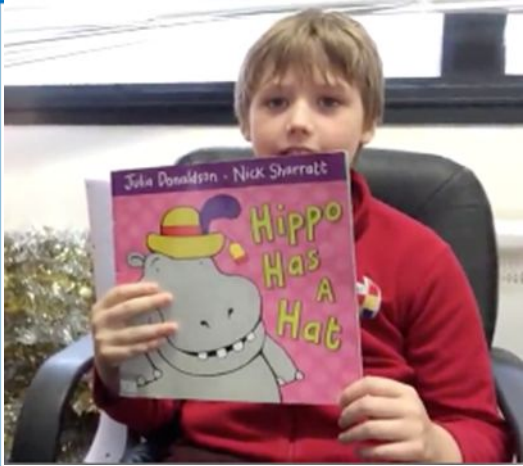
Richard P. Hastings
Freddy Jackson Brown
University of Warwick, UK

Abstract

Children with autism often exhibit difficulties with reading comprehension. Recent studies have demonstrated positive outcomes for typical learners from the internet-based reading comprehension program, Headsprout Reading Comprehension®. In the present study, a preliminary evaluation of HRC was conducted with six children with autism. The primary aim was to investigate whether it would be feasible to use HRC with children with autism and whether any adaptations to the standard teaching procedure and extra support would be needed. A secondary aim was to investigate the potential of HRC to improve reading comprehension skills. The study used a multiple case series design with six children. Results are discussed with reference to increased reading comprehension

Headsprout Reading Comprehension was found to be an effective programme to increase reading comprehension skills for those with autism.





Above all, reading should be and is **FUN!!!!**

We encourage and celebrate pupils reading for leisure, reading independently, enjoying having stories read to them by their tutors, and reading with their peers.

