

## Introduction

There is a hard core of illiteracy in this country. Over 20% of 11 year olds have insufficient reading and writing skills to access a secondary curriculum. Over 20% of 7 year olds cannot read. In many inner city areas the percentages are much higher.

These are the children whose self-esteem is often at rock bottom, and who, as a consequence, disrupt lesson after lesson. If they are not disruptive they are invisible. What can be done to rescue these children? A radical but simple answer is needed.

Too many children cannot read and write because they have not been taught in the most logical and simple way:

In order to read children need both the ability to *decode* the written symbols of our language into words and the ability to *comprehend* the text. Decoding can take place without comprehension, but comprehension cannot take place without decoding. Efficient decoding, therefore, is the *necessary*, though not sufficient condition of learning to read.

Too many children have not mastered these necessary conditions for reading and writing.

The programmes below teach children to read and write in a simple and logical way. They are taught to decode texts effortlessly so all their resources can be used to *comprehend* what they read. They are taught to spell easily so their efforts can be directed towards composing what they write. Put simply:

- if children cannot read graphemes (letters/ letter groups) they will have difficulty in reading words;
- if they cannot read words they will be unable to read the text;
- if they cannot decode a text effortlessly they will be unable to comprehend what they read.

## rml 1 programme

rml 1 is designed for children in Reception and Year 1 and for children in Years 2, 3 and 4 who cannot read confidently. The programme is also appropriate for children with special needs and EAL children at stages 1-2 in older year groups.

## rml 2 programme

rml 2 is designed older KS2 and KS3 children who find it hard to understand texts because they cannot decode effortlessly and therefore have difficulty understanding what they read.

Once teachers are trained they are provided with all their day-to-day lesson plans as well as all children's reading materials. Very little planning or preparation is needed.

The programme includes teaching children to:

- **Understand phoneme-grapheme correspondence for reading and spelling**

This is taught quickly and effectively using mnemonic associations.

- **Read single and multi-syllabic words containing specific phoneme-grapheme correspondences**

Children use phoneme-blending (or 'synthesising') for word-reading, progressing from the simplest level to more complex levels.

- **Read phonically irregular words**

Children are taught to read the small number of words that do not follow a regular phonic pattern.

- **Read texts containing carefully controlled phonic and irregular vocabulary**

These are very lively texts that are written to include a range of fiction and non-fiction genres. They have been specially written to help children practise reading words containing a controlled and cumulative phonic vocabulary. Once children can 'decode' the text, they are then helped to re-tell, summarise, read with appropriate intonation and discuss key questions about the text.

rml 1 and rml 2 have texts appropriate to younger and older children, respectively. *Every child has a copy of the text.*

- **Spell words containing a gradual build up of phoneme-grapheme correspondences**

Children learn to spell a controlled and cumulative phonic vocabulary using a simple system that has proved highly successful. They are also taught to spell the small number of irregular words.

- **Develop a wide range of vocabulary for writing**

Although the texts are phonically regular, a wide range of vocabulary is introduced to broaden children's spoken and written vocabulary.

- **Write in a range of genres**

Children are helped to write independently step-by-step. Both teachers and children are supported with ideas, structures and writing frames.

Marking rubrics are used for assessing the quality of writing so that children have a clear idea, as they write, about their audience, purpose and the form their writing will take.

The writing, generally, ties in closely with the texts they read, but further support is given to teachers to develop writing in the afternoons (rml 1 only).

- **Develop a clear handwriting style**

It is vital that children develop a clear and fluent handwriting style as soon as they learn to write. Once they have mastered clear individual letter formation they are taught to join letters into a fluid script.

Teachers are given step-by-step guidance (rml 1 only).

## **Literature**

Teachers introduce children to a range of literature (of their choice) alongside the rml programme. Stories, poems, non-fiction texts are read *to* children. Books are chosen with no other objective than 'this is a good book'. No expectation is placed upon the children to read these books for themselves before they have the necessary decoding skills. It is vital that children do not struggle as they learn to read; too many children get turned off reading because they believe it is just too hard for them. While children learn to read, teachers encourage children to love books. It is only when children love stories that they will want to read them for themselves.

As soon as children can read texts half way through the programmes, they are then encouraged to read familiar stories and texts for themselves at home as well as at school.

## **Children's talk**

Great emphasis is placed upon *all* children talking throughout the whole lesson; when they can talk about and explain their ideas we can be sure they understand what they have learned.

Cooperative learning is a key ingredient to the programme. Children work with a partner to practise what they have been taught. This means that all children participate during the whole lesson; there is no 'down time'.

## **Classroom management**

Emphasis is also placed upon assertive, positive discipline. Specific strategies are used in the programme that teachers have found supportive in all their teaching.

## **How long does the programme last?**

rml 1 and 2 start with an Introductory Module that takes 10 - 15 hours for most children.

### **rml 1**

There are then 36 one-day modules of work and 33 four-day modules. This programme will take at least 40 weeks.

### **rml 2**

There are then 35+ four-day modules of work and 6 three-day assessment modules.

This programme will therefore take about 38 weeks.

## **How much time is needed each day?**

Children work for about 1 hour 15 minutes a day. Primary schools should also allow time in the afternoons for extra writing.

Children start the programme in Reception but only spend 20 minutes each day in the morning and another 10 minutes in the afternoon.

## **How are children grouped?**

All children are assessed at the beginning of the programme. After following the first module of the programme they are assessed again and grouped according to similar phonic ability.

Children are placed into groups of between 6 and 20, depending upon their maturity and ability. It is helpful if children are grouped across years to make best use of teaching staff.

**Who teaches the rml 1 programme?**

Both teachers and confident teaching assistants teach the rml 1 programme, to allow the groups to be kept reasonably small.

**Who teaches the rml 2 programme?**

During the first year of the rml 2 programme teachers are selected because they are considered, by students and staff, to be 'high status' teachers and they can maintain a high level of *positive* discipline. In secondary schools, these teachers may be teachers of subjects other than English or Special Educational Needs. No previous experience of teaching reading is necessary.

**What happens if a child, who has special needs, makes very slow progress?**

There will be a few children who need extra support to maintain progress. These children work with a reading tutor (teaching assistant) in the afternoon for 20 minutes to ensure they do not fall behind their peers.

**How much preparation is needed?**

Children have their own expendable work modules. Very little photocopying is needed. Teachers have their own manual that gives day-by-day detailed and explicit direction. Very little planning is needed.

**Implementation**

In order for the programme to be successful it is important that the school follows the guidance below.

**The role of the head teacher**

The programme will not work to its full effect without the commitment and support of the head teacher. It is hoped that the head teacher in primary schools will give full support to the programme by attending the initial training, supporting the rml programme manager in his/ her role and providing cover for the rml programme manager to fulfil his/ her role.

**The role of the rml manager**

The rml programme manager is a senior member of staff, most likely the English coordinator, and is responsible for:

1. Supporting rml teachers in the implementation of the programme and checking that rml assessments are kept up to date;
2. Training rml reading tutors;
3. Informing families of the rml programme and the role they can play;
4. Spotting children who have poor attendance rates and contacting the school attendance officer;
5. Checking that every child taking part in the programme has a homework partner and that the homework diary is completed;

6. Ensuring that any child falling behind the programme receives 20 minutes a day extra tutoring from an rml trained member of the support staff;
7. Diagnosing a problem when the reading teacher cannot find out why a child is making insufficient progress.

### **The role of rml teachers**

rml teachers are responsible for:

1. Teaching the programme rigorously,
2. Keeping assessments up to date and using this information to inform their teaching;
3. Encouraging high attendance.

### **Attendance**

The rml modules of work are intensive and cumulative so poor attendance will disrupt a child's progress. An rml register is kept every day and monitored closely by the rml programme manager.