



## Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is the core intervention used in the *Every Child a Reader* programme. It provides a short-term intervention for children who have the lowest achievement in literacy learning in their first years at school. Children taking part in Reading Recovery receive daily 30-minute individual lessons for up to 20 weeks from a specially trained teacher, alongside work to engage the children's parents or carers in supporting their children's learning.

Reading Recovery teaching is based on a detailed assessment of what the child knows and what they need to learn next. This means that each and every lesson is different. Here is one example.

### A lesson with Shannon

Shannon is the youngest of four children. When she began her Reading Recovery lessons towards the end of her second year in school (Year 1), she was a non-reader. She has speech difficulties and finds it hard to articulate sounds like 's', saying 'ged' instead of 'said', for example. There have been troubles at home and at school she seemed nervy and quite withdrawn.

Watching a Reading Recovery lesson for Shannon is like watching a mixture of individual speech therapy, language development, literacy development and confidence-boosting. Her teacher constantly helps Shannon to notice the strategies she is using to work out words when she reads, using very specific praise. 'I'll tell you what you did that I



particularly liked - you solved that problem - when you got to this word ('can') you first said 'can't' then you changed it to 'can'. She encourages Shannon to look at all the letters in a word, asking 'Why wasn't it 'can't'? Shannon replies 'Cos it hasn't got a't on the end'.

Shannon came into her lessons knowing quite a few letter-sound correspondences but not being able to use them to work out words, so her teacher regularly focuses on this: 'You chopped up the word into its sounds and put it back together, didn't you?' When Shannon reads a word as 'weeds' instead of 'plants', she reminds her 'Yes, from the picture it could be plants, but we need to look at the word, don't we?' She is taught the 'ee' sound in the word so that she will attend to it independently in future

encounters.

Shannon is also encouraged to sound like a reader – ‘Let’s have a look at this page. Let’s try and make it sound good’. Her attention is drawn to speech marks and exclamation marks and what they mean.

Shannon then does some fast letter sorting, using magnetic letters on the whiteboard, to help her distinguish letter shapes and remember both letter names and sounds for q, sh, y and a. She practises reading two words she will meet a lot – ‘they’ and ‘this’.

A chat about her weekend leads to Shannon thinking of a sentence she wants to write (‘I coloured a picture of Sleeping Beauty’). ‘Beauty’ is hard for her to articulate (‘Booty’), and she often forgets what she wants to say as she writes. Her teacher helps her rehearse the sentence as she goes along, and teaches her how to get her letter formation and positioning right. Shannon finds it hard to hear the separate sounds in words she wants to write – especially the vowel sounds like the ‘i’ in ‘picture’. Listening hard as she articulates the words, and writing each letter in a separate box, helps her. She writes ‘of’ as ‘ov’ and her teacher has her write ‘of’ correctly several times so that she becomes really fluent. The sound ‘ee’ comes up again in ‘sleeping’ and she is helped to remember it.

Shannon is then introduced to a new book, about ducks. Her teacher asks her if she can find a word with ‘ee’ in it (she locates ‘see’). The teacher uses the word ‘quack’ to reinforce the ‘q’ sound that Shannon learned yesterday and practised today in her fast letter sorting. Encouraging use of the sounding out strategy again, so that Shannon will apply her knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, the teacher asks her to find the word ‘pond’, then asks ‘How did you know it was pond?’ (‘Cos it goes p-o-n-d’, Shannon says). Shannon and her teacher discuss what the book is going to be about and share a laugh about a funny element of the story.

In the three weeks she has been having Reading Recovery lessons, Shannon has moved from being a non-reader to being able to read Reading Recovery level 5 books. She looks, her teachers say, like a different child – confident and no longer worried. She loves books now and believes in herself as a reader and writer. Her teachers confidently predict that by the end of her lessons (another nine weeks or so) she will have caught up completely with her peers.

Shannon’s attendance when she started her Reading Recovery lessons was not good, but is now much more regular. Her family can really see what the programme is doing for her and want her to get the most from her special teaching.

Reading Recovery turns children into independent learners, able to apply learned problem-solving strategies whenever they meet new literacy challenges. Every Reading Recovery lesson encourages the child to notice what they are doing to help themselves, rather than what the teacher is doing to help them. Every Reading Recovery programme ends with a period where the Reading Recovery teacher works with the child in their own classroom, making sure that they generalise these independent learning strategies to the classroom context.

Unlike other interventions, which simply teach reading and writing skills, Reading Recovery explicitly develops the child’s perceived self-efficacy – their view of

themselves as able to control events and influence their own success or failure - which has been identified as a critical factor in educational success.

The key to the successful implementation of Reading Recovery is in the model of training. Initial teacher training is a part-time course, for one academic year, during which the teacher works with low attaining children in their school. Teachers become sensitive observers of children's reading and writing behaviours and develop skill in making moment-by-moment analyses that inform teaching decisions.

Following the initial year of training, teachers continue to participate in ongoing professional development sessions. They continue to teach children in front of their colleagues and to discuss their programmes. Continuing professional development sessions provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to remain responsive to individual children, to question the effectiveness of their practices, to get help from peers on particularly hard-to-teach children, and to consider how new knowledge in the field may influence their practice.

As well as working directly with the hardest-to-teach children, Reading Recovery teachers also act as a resource for their schools in raising literacy standards more widely. Reading Recovery teachers provide training to class teachers, for example, in how to target their teaching on the basis of detailed assessment that identifies children's precise needs. They also provide training, support and monitoring for teaching assistants using a range of other literacy intervention programmes.

Reading Recovery is popular with teachers in England. : A Times Educational Supplement survey in 2005 found that half the primary school teachers voting stated that the re-introduction of Reading Recovery programmes was their top investment priority.