Supporting Initial Reading Acquisition and Development

Teacher name: Mrs. Shirley English
School: Pathhead Primary
Local authority: Fife

Underpinning research: A phonics focused/synthetic phonics approach is effective, particularly for children with weak language skills. Letter sound knowledge and phonological awareness (phoneme) are strong predictors of early reading success.

Implications for education:
It is crucial to have a good understanding of children’s “reading readiness” before starting their reading instruction. Synthetic phonics is known to be very effective method of instruction, but particularly for children starting school with weak language skills. Reduce focus on “whole word” teaching as children commit to memory based on visual features such as the size /colour of the card/font.
By better understanding the skills supporting children’s reading development and providing focused training and support in the skills associated with instructional method, potential reading difficulties could be minimised.

Ideas for the classroom: Visually divide words into syllables for reading and teach syllable blending for word reading. Communication Attainment Project (CAP Fife).
Using salt and dry/wet sand to form letters make words. Whiteboards and pens. Introducing letter sounds and letter formation using rainbow writing (Read Write Inc.)
Formative assessment using school phonics checklist or School phonics programme such as Jolly Phonics. Early identification of P1 teachers so they can regularly visit pre-school children in Nursery to have a baseline of readiness for reading. PIPs testing in September and June for P1 children. AFE testing for 3, P5, and P7.

Underpinning research: Children’s enjoyment of their method of reading instruction is related to their reading attitudes, confidence and skills.

Ideas for the classroom: Workshop for Literacy (Fife Council)
World Book Day. National Book Week.” Caught Reading “- Reading in the playground, reading at Forest Kindergarten, reading in the dinner/gym halls. Pop up libraries. Lunchtime or after school reading clubs.
Early identification of children who are not enjoying learning to read. Discuss reasons why with children, parents and previous teachers.

Book reviews of favourite books “Read a book on your own and give the dog a bone” (P1-P3). Bring in books from home to share with class. Use of props/puppets. Have a selection of story sacks.