



***Phonics in Action Visit***  
***Carried out by Rebecca Chamberlain, English Governor***  
***12 October 2016***

**Purpose of visit**

Following on from the specialist phonics training sessions held for staff in the summer by an external provider, to experience how phonics is taught in each year group.

**Introduction / Initial Thoughts and Observations**

The visit was planned to coincide with a trainee teacher visiting from Loughton School.

***Detail of Visit***

The first session was with a Year 1 group, with Laura Pittam (Giraffes teacher). Phonics skills were being developed using sounds, and applying them to digraphs. The teacher shook a little pot and the children were to guess what they could hear from a variety of pictures on the interactive whiteboard. When they had identified “coins”, they practised writing the word and talked about the “oi” sound. This group focused on developing some of those whose skills need more help than others.

The second session was with a Year 2 group, with Alex Wolfe (Wolves teacher). While the children were arriving from their break, those already in the classroom were asked to find as many words as they could using the letters within a much longer word, using their pens and boards. The formal lesson itself was to identify which words were real and which were invented, focusing particularly on split digraphs. The teacher used an app on the whiteboard to help with this, in which a word would be “fed” to one of two aliens depending on whether it was a real word or not. Correct answers were rewarded with a resounding belch, which was an excellent motivator for the audience. At various intervals they were also required to spell words correctly and show the teacher. Good examples of spellings were shown to all pupils.

The final session I attended was in Foundation Stage 2, with Karen Martin (Tigers teacher). In the very early stages of learning phonics, the children were practising different letter sounds, and associating each one with a sound or action from everyday life. They also practised writing the letters with their boards and pens, and given help with holding their pen using the “froggy fingers” technique. A story

followed, to help the children see the important link between the phonics they were learning, and the ultimate goal of reading.

### **Final observations and comments**

My overall impression is that the school's approach to phonics is thorough, with a clear strategy for progressing through the year groups. The classroom practice I observed was clearly supportive of the relevant sections of the school's English policy, specifically those in relation to phonics and reading.

The children are fully engaged with the sessions, very much in keeping with the school's approach to an innovative and creative education - and it is clear to see how useful it is to group by ability in KS1, as the sessions can be tailored in ways that the pupils can best access and understand. The multisensory approach to teaching is very much in evidence, and it is lovely to see examples of the children's written work in classrooms and in the school foyer.

Many thanks to the teachers who allowed me to visit their lessons.

### **Actions**

No actions were required.

### **Action following governing board meeting**

Record any action agreed by the governing board with regard to this visit