Introduction to Project X CODE

CODE is a literacy intervention programme aligned to the approach of systematic synthetic phonics, specifically targeted at struggling readers from Years 2 to 4 who are not on track to achieve appropriate levels for their age. The Project X CODE approach is fully in line with the Phonics Screening Check to be undertaken by all children at the end of Year 1 in England, and the programme provides thorough revision and an incremental progression which will support schools in ensuring that children’s difficulties are addressed and that they are well prepared for retaking the test. The intervention has been designed in such a way that you could choose to use it to bridge the Year 2 to Year 3 (P3–P4) transition for children whose reading is still not fully secure. Children with severe learning difficulties which present barriers to cognition and learning may benefit from the programme at any age as the interest level of the books will apply to a wide age range.

The programme is based around a set of carefully levelled books and detailed, daily session notes to enable a trained teaching assistant to deliver the programme. The books contain a cumulative, episodic adventure in a style that relates to children’s interests, building children’s enjoyment and motivation to read.

The books follow a clear progression designed to revisit and accelerate acquisition of phonic knowledge and application as well as key comprehension skills. They also have the potential to provide excellent stimuli for creative and other writing.

Features of high quality intervention

CODE incorporates features proven by research to be characteristic of high-quality literacy interventions, which:

- operate as additional support to high quality first teaching, especially the effective early teaching of phonics;
- make use of approaches that have proven evidence of effectiveness – including in this case attention to comprehension from the earliest levels in the programme;
- are used early, before literacy failure has become embedded, and are targeted at the right children through careful assessment and tracking of progress;
- aim for children to reach the expected levels for their age, rather than just narrow the gap between them and their peers;
- receive strong leadership support and are delivered by highly-skilled, well-trained adults, who receive on-going support. Professional development films are available at www.oxfordprimary.co.uk;
- ensure links to day to day class teaching;
- provide strategies to support parental engagement;
- are time-limited, and have clear entry and exit criteria.

The pedagogy of intervention support

CODE is rooted in evidence from research: intervention is most effective when it is delivered early, is systematic, designed to accelerate learning, focused, frequent and with inbuilt consolidation. Learning-focused sessions and discussions help remove obstacles to achievement, develop positive learning dispositions, and build pupils’ learning skills so that the impact of intervention support is seen in the classroom as well as in the intervention sessions themselves.
CODE intervention sessions are underpinned by key features of session design that are known to be critical to success:

- The teaching is focused and structured so that pupils know what is to be learned and how it fits with what they know and can do already.
- Teaching concentrates on the misconceptions, gaps or weaknesses that pupils have experienced in their learning to date, and builds in additional consolidation.
- Sessions are designed around a structure that emphasises the stages of learning from which pupils will most benefit.
- Pupils are motivated with pace, dialogue and stimulating activities.
- Pupils’ progress is tracked and assessed regularly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of the effort pupils will need to make and the progress that can and should be achieved.
- Teachers and teaching assistants create a settled and purposeful atmosphere for learning.

**Characteristics of children who struggle with literacy**

CODE is specifically designed to address the barriers which are known to affect children who struggle most with the acquisition of core literacy skills. Participating children are likely to exhibit most or all of the following characteristics:

- Limited language experience, leading to limited vocabulary and poorly developed speaking and listening skills. They find it hard to respond to questions, engage in discussion or explain their reasoning/thought process.
- Anxiety, frustration, lack of motivation. They avoid reading, never choose to read voluntarily, or say things like, ‘We haven’t learned that yet’, ‘This is too hard for me’ or even ‘I can’t read’.
- Dependency on adult support. They lack independent strategies to solve problems, so will often look to an adult to supply a word or tell them what to do.
- Difficulty with working memory – retention, recall and rapid retrieval of relevant information.
- Problems with applying their learning in other contexts, e.g. they recognise many grapheme-phoneme correspondences but don’t apply these in their reading.
- Spatial difficulties, e.g. left to right directionality, tracking a sentence from one line to the next.
- A need for over-learning. They need to repeat the same strategy and practise the same skills many times more than their peers in order to commit these to memory and use them confidently.

**Involving parents/carers in Project X CODE**

Parents should be informed about their child’s involvement in any additional intervention: making it clear from the start that they are welcome to come and see a session in action can often help to dispel anxiety, as can showing them some of the interactive activities involved and, if necessary, reassuring them that they are not expected to read to their children or hear them read every night. Of course, the parents who are confident should be encouraged to read with their children and the benefits of this explained to them.

CODE includes a range of materials designed to help parents and/or carers get involved:

- **Before and After reading pages in the books**: these are closely linked to the content of the CODE sessions and are suitable for a child to repeat at home once they have received the relevant session.
- **Takeaway activities**: these include simple speaking and listening activities, e.g. *Ask me about labels* to be worn by the child.
- **CODE sessions**: schools could ask parents in to see a session – either ‘live’ or on video (Oxford Owl includes a selection of the CODE eBooks, which parents could read with children [www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk))
Investing in Project X CODE: funding and maximising the impact

Funding streams available to support implementation

In making decisions about the deployment of funding to provide additional intervention support, head teachers and governors will annually consider pupil needs, available funds and the evidence base for allocating resources to close attainment gaps. Funding sources available include:

**The dedicated schools grant.** This forms the bulk of the school budget and incorporates the individual school’s share of funding designed to meet the needs of all pupils, including those in need of additional support.

**SEN funding.** This is designed to support the school in meeting the needs of children with a wide range of SEN, many of whom may well benefit from CODE.

**The Pupil Premium.** Specifically designed to close attainment gaps and allocated on the basis of and targeted at children who are entitled to Free School Meals (and other vulnerable groups) and for whom economic or other disadvantage is leading to underachievement.

Tracking of the impact on individual attainment of such targeted expenditure enables school leaders and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of the deployment of resources on an intervention. CODE includes easy to use on-going assessment to enable the tracking of progress.

Maximising impact: fidelity and flexibility

Research has shown that interventions achieve their maximum impact when core elements are closely adhered to (fidelity), whilst other aspects are tailored to the individual circumstances of schools (flexibility). CODE has been carefully developed with the following core and flexible aspects in mind.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core aspects requiring fidelity to secure impact</th>
<th>Flexible aspects to be determined by schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership support</td>
<td>Choice of target group(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A teacher and teaching assistant trained in synthetic phonics and intervention support</td>
<td>Group size</td>
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<tr>
<td>A link teacher to support the work of the TA</td>
<td>Choice of entry and exit points for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent intervention sessions (four times per week)</td>
<td>Timetabling in the school day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to the 30-minute structure and timings</td>
<td>Scheduling of intervention period</td>
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<td>Use of the inbuilt assessments and progress checks to track impact during the intervention and monitoring of the maintenance of gains</td>
<td>Choice of standardised tests to assess impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular dialogue between class teacher and intervention TA</td>
<td>Links to progress meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent/carer involvement</td>
<td>Effective strategies to involve parents and carers</td>
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Effective school management of Project X CODE

School self – evaluation checklist

A designated member of the school leadership team is fully aware of the purpose of the programme and the intended target groups. They manage the CODE programme effectively by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including the programme in the school’s provision map for intervention</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring that CODE is understood by all relevant staff, including, as applicable, the class teachers and SENCO/Inclusion/Intervention manager</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying a suitable teaching assistant to deliver the programme, who is fully trained in systematic synthetic phonics and experienced in delivering small group intervention</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying a named link teacher who will manage, monitor and support the work of the teaching assistant and will also be fully trained in synthetic phonics and intervention support</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring that data is used effectively to identify children for intervention and to track their progress subsequently</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensuring that a suitable space is made available for effective delivery of the programme and that the required programme resources are available to the teaching assistant</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocating time for the teaching assistant so that s/he can prepare sessions and liaise with relevant class teacher(s); including the joint undertaking of the progress checks</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting the teaching assistant and relevant class teachers in engaging the parents and carers of children involved in the programme</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming personally familiar with the teaching methods used in CODE – for example, by observing Project X CODE sessions</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As appropriate, linking the delivery and impact of CODE to the performance management of the teaching assistant and relevant class teacher</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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Available to download at www.oxfordprimary.co.uk

FREE Support just when you need it