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**Piper Books: The straightforward programme to transform every child into a reader.**

### **BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION: BRI**

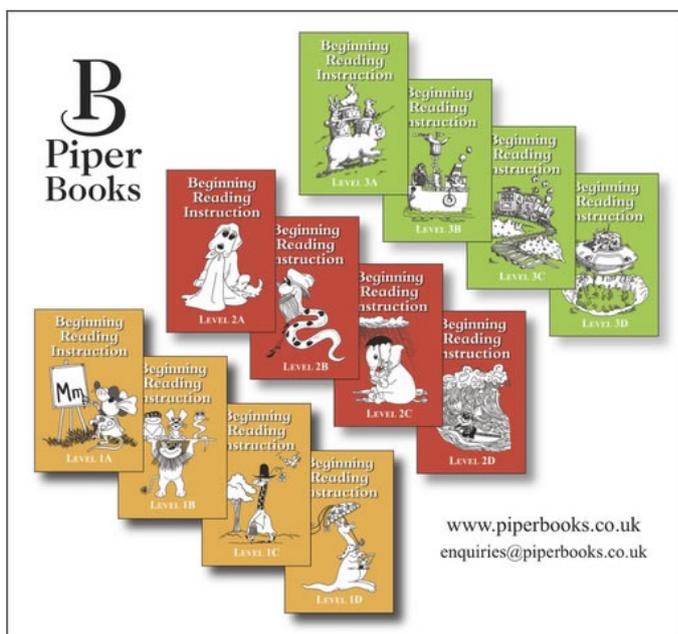
*'For struggling readers, Catch-Up teaching requires 'just the same SSP as is used for the whole-class teaching - just more practice. Nearly always the children do not know the letter sounds really well and have not had nearly enough blending practice.'*

– Sue Lloyd, Jolly Phonics

### **A TOOL FOR TEACHING READING**

BRI decodable books are an instrument for conveying the 'how to' of reading. The programme consists of meticulously sequenced tales, with incremental introduction of the Alphabetic Code. Text in the first 78 stories is limited to single-syllable words, making the early steps of decoding/reading as straightforward as possible.

A daily one-to-one or small group (maximum 3 pupils) 10-15 minute session with a TA or a volunteer, in addition to mainstream Synthetic Phonics teaching, will typically preclude the need for later reading intervention.



## WHY DECODING?

Decoding is the most essential skill to develop in order to become a successful reader. It is the one fail-safe strategy that enables children to work out most words they've heard but have never seen in print, as well as sounding out words they're unfamiliar with. The ability to decode is the foundation upon which all other reading development – fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, etc – is built. Most children readily master this skill with the copious practice BRI stories provide.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BRI

A team of psychologists, linguists and psychometrists at the prestigious South West Regional Lab (SWRL) worked with hundreds of schools in the American West to create a foolproof system that would enable even the most disadvantaged pupils to achieve literacy. The first team to map the Alphabetic Code, SWRL integrated this knowledge into over 200 code-based stories. Phonics instruction in BRI aligns with leading SSP programmes after a small percentage of sounds have been introduced.

### LEARNING TO READ WITH BRI: 1

Ease of instruction All that is needed for tutor and pupil alike is *'Say the sounds and read the word.'* Bar immediate error correction, the less interference the better; BRI ensures that the child focuses on decoding-through-the-word.

Lightening the cognitive load Learning is more effective when children aren't grappling with too many confusing ideas (i.e. multi-cueing). Complexity is detrimental to Alphabetic Code understanding.

*'We have overcomplicated teaching'* – Jo Facer, ResearchEd 2016

### LEARNING TO READ WITH BRI: 2

Spaced repetition Information is better retained if it is studied for brief periods with new sound/letter correspondences repeated over time in different stories. *'The best way to help the brain to "remember" the code's patterns with minimum effort is through controlled exposure and varied repetition'* – Diane McGuinness

Mixing related but distinct material BRI deals ingeniously, through story, with 'variation' (same sound represented by >1 spelling: e.g. *me, meet*) and 'overlap' (1 spelling representing >1 sound: e.g. *on, no*).

## METICULOUS ATTENTION TO DETAIL

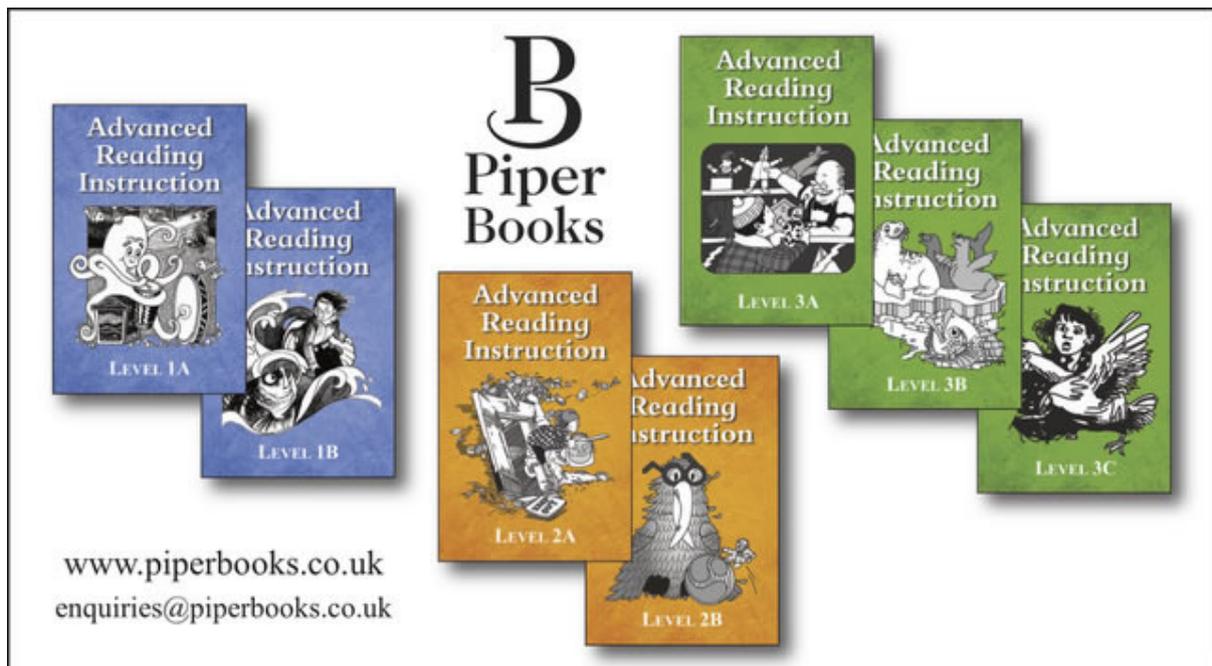
Discreet Phonemes Trains children to 'hear' discreet phonemes through an emphasis on a 'sound-through-the-word' routine. For those with phonological difficulties this consistent instruction is particularly helpful.

Blending made easy Careful selection of specific sounds in early books helps make the connection between sound and letter(s). For those who struggle to blend, the selection makes it easier to 'hear' each sound as they blend sounds into words.

Juxtaposing look-alike words (e.g. *sheet/shall/shell/shut/sell*) means that attention has to be paid to each grapheme within a word. This ensures that the ‘easy option’ – guessing – is discouraged.

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR ‘CATCH-UP’**

BRI’s lively ‘no fuss’ programme represents excellent value for money and is easy to deliver. BRI Levels 1-3 should be completed by the end of Reception, whereupon the pupil can move on to its sister-programme ARI (Advanced Reading Instruction) – three more Levels, covering the Advanced Alphabetic Code (including, by the end of Level 2, all correspondences tested in the PSC). Spelling, Dictation, Story Questions, Initial and Mastery Assessments, and Getting Started Guide are included. No worksheets, additional materials, or manipulatives are required.



### **LANGUAGE AND/OR DECODING DEFICITS**

Many young children arrive at school with impoverished language skills. Some will need both language enhancement and plentiful decoding practice.

As well as laying the foundations for a lifetime of literacy by carefully instilling decoding skills, BRI offers opportunities for children to develop spoken language. Each book includes several questions to open up discussion on everything from the plot to the personalities of the lively animal characters, including pompous Sam the Lion, cheeky Mat the Rat, vain Ann the Giraffe and a whole host of other idiosyncratic creatures, ready for scraps and scrapes.

### **COGNITIVE MATTERS**

All struggling readers, especially SEN children, benefit from decodable books informed by cognitive science. BRI unfolds very gently – *‘with too great a cognitive load children lose track of what they’re doing, make mistakes, they get lost, give up’* – Annie Murphy Paul, *MindShift*

*‘Putting to-be-learned material in story format improves learning outcomes’* – Daniel Willingham

*‘Flexible knowledge is not easily achieved’* – Daniel Willingham

BRI carefully introduces a minimum of Advanced correspondences, encouraging both sentence flow and language flexibility in tandem with an early alert to the conceptual structure of the code.

*'Retrieving a specific memory, given partial cues or hints, improves future retrieval'* – Robert Bjork  
BRI's Spelling routine – introduced after reading practice – underpins retrieval practice and creates space for story immersion and language development.

### **THE VALUE OF LEARNING TO READ THROUGH STORIES**

Character-driven tales in BRI offer children the chance to become as immersed in the world of imagination as they are in phonics skills.

*'The human brain seems to be set up specially for the retention of stories. They sink in and they stay in the mind more easily than anything else. Things that create an emotional reaction will be better remembered'* – Daniel Willingham

### **WHY PHONICS IS SO IMPORTANT AND WHY SOME CHILDREN FAIL TO MASTER IT**

*'English is an alphabetic language. We have 26 letters. These letters, in various combinations, represent the 44 sounds in our language. Teaching students the basic letter-sound combinations gives them access to sounding out approximately 84% of the words in English print... It takes mastery on each phonics skill and there is not enough review or repetition of skills so they "stick" and not enough application of skills to real texts. Systematic phonics means that students are exposed to each sound-letter pattern in the English language in turn'* – Wiley Blevins, International Literacy Association, 2019