

Ruth Sutcliffe and Bev Keen: Senior Lecturers, ITE Primary Education 3-11

We have a saying in our office: 'Keep it real!' Keeping it real for our second year Primary Education 5-11 and final year Primary Education 3-7 trainees, (with QTS), includes the Alwoodley Reading Project, first established in 2013 and extended following our Ofsted Phonics Monitoring Visit in 2015. Each trainee visits Alwoodley Primary School, Leeds, for two consecutive half mornings, either just before or just after their main teaching placement of that year. Not long, you might say, but long enough to firstly observe and work with small groups of children during high quality teaching of systematic synthetic phonics (or spelling in Y2) and secondly, to read with individual children for 5-10 minutes each.

As our trainees settle each child to read, (at small tables outside the classrooms or simply sitting on the floor in the corridor - neither pupils nor trainees seem to mind), their 'teachery' persona is revealed to their university Tutor who sits nearby. Our role is to listen in and notice all the tiny individual interactions that our trainees have with each child; these reveal not only significant and impressive subject knowledge – 'Try that word again, sounding through each phoneme' or 'Let's just check this vowel digraph here' - but subtle skills, of learning how to draw out children's understanding of the text through open questioning, building on their interests and enthusiasms and perhaps making links to other stories or films the children may have read or seen. The experience is intimate and immediate for both the child and the trainee. The moments when we Tutors enter this space can also have particular resonance, e.g. 'Why don't we model how that sentence sounds when we give full attention and energy to that single little exclamation mark?' Because such suggestions are made at an exact point of learning for both trainee teacher and a pupil, the impact can be two-fold and long-lasting. In fact, it's three-fold, since we gauge how well our trainees use phonic and language comprehension strategies in their teaching of reading and therefore where our taught programmes could be adapted if needed.

The Project is supported with a printed booklet which sets out observation and note-taking proformas; finer points of effective practice which trainees might not otherwise notice is happening, or which has been planned for by the class teacher, are highlighted. This is later followed up with a requirement to complete an online Reflective Evaluation of their experience which when submitted, sends them a copy of their responses. In this way, trainees are further guided as to the depth, breadth and quality of what their chosen profession demands of them; keeping it real in just a few hours of focused interactions.