

Why We Use Explicit Instruction for Literacy at Castletown Primary School



Explicit instruction improves student achievement

Explicit instruction is systematic, direct, and success-oriented, and has been shown to significantly improve academic outcomes for all students.

It reduces cognitive overload by breaking learning into small, manageable steps, with clear modelling and supported practice.

It supports struggling readers and diverse learners

Research shows that explicit, teacher-directed instruction is more effective for students who struggle with reading than less direct approaches.

It makes learning accessible, predictable, and transparent, important for children with literacy difficulties or limited background knowledge.

Clear explanations and modelling set students up for success

Explicit instruction clearly:

- Explains what is being taught
- Shows students how to do it ("I do")
- Provides guided practice ("We do")
- Leads to independence ("You do")

This 'Check for Understanding' structure prevents misconceptions from forming and builds accurate foundational literacy skills.

It reduces cognitive overload for learners

Explicit instruction breaks complex literacy skills (like decoding or comprehension strategies) into small steps, preventing working-memory overload and supporting mastery.

Ensures all students are actively engaged and responding

Explicit instruction uses techniques such as multiple opportunities to respond, choral responses, partner talk, whiteboards, and monitored practice, ensuring all students, not just confident ones, participate.

Maximises clarity and removes guesswork

Students aren't left to infer what to do. Teachers provide clear explanations, direct demonstrations, and precise language, which builds accurate literacy foundations.

Supports equity and reduces learning gaps

Explicit instruction provides consistent, structured support that particularly benefits students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those underrepresented in achievement data.

Leads to faster error correction

Because teachers check for understanding frequently, misconceptions in reading and writing are identified and corrected before they become embedded.

It aligns with the Science of Reading

Structured literacy relies on explicit and systematic instruction, especially for phonics, decoding, and other foundational reading skills. This approach is now seen as the gold standard for teaching reading.