Visual Phonics
For Deaf children
who use BSL

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE
14TH MAY 2016
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What is Visual Phonics?

- Visual system for teaching phonics - based on **Visual Phonics by Hand** developed by Babs Day (Longwill School, Birmingham)
- Uses visual cues based on BSL fingerspelling alphabet
- Focuses on discriminating between **letter names** vs **lip-patterns/sounds**
  - Phonemes (the lip-pattern/sound)
  - Graphemes (letters or combination of letters)
- Aims to develop knowledge/skills in blending and segmenting words
- Develops skills in using lip-patterns to “sound out” letter/words with a visual cue for support.
Historical over-reliance on teaching/learning whole word for reading/writing (spellings) from visual memory

Some deaf children find it hard when learning new spellings/reading new words – they have no alternative strategy

A tool to support development of phonological awareness and literacy

Emphasis on ‘seeing the sound’ and recognising/making lip-patterns (with voice if appropriate)

Most effective with deaf children who have:
  - Good language/vocabulary knowledge
  - Good lip/speechreading skills
  - Ability to produce English lip-patterns
The VP resource

- Teaching the letter/s and sounds/lip-pattern using VP cues
- Posters/songs to teach the graphemes/phonemes
- Identifying the initial/medial/final phonemes/graphemes
- Colour coding to link with lip-patterns/tongue/mouth position
- Linking letters that look similar on the mouth, but use different cues to differentiate them, e.g. p b m
- Explicit teaching of spelling choices for phonemes, e.g.
  - “ee” sound/lip-pattern: tree, beach, me, donkey, thief
  - “f” sound/lip-pattern: fish, photo, coffee, cough
Visual phonics consonants
Visual phonics vowels
Short ‘e’ VP and song

Ben went to bed

Ben went to bed e e e

Ben went to bed e e e

Ben went to bed e e e

Ben went to bed with teddy
Teaching points - example

eat
bread
tea
Sea
question
read
I read the book.
I read the book.
Blending – building up words from sounds/lip-patterns

- **ph** – o – ne = phone
- **b** – ea – ch = beach
- **sh** – ee – p = sheep
- **k** – ey = key
Segmenting – taking words apart (breaking them up into sounds/lip-patterns)

- cat \rightarrow c-a-t
- shop \rightarrow sh-o-p
- make \rightarrow m-a-ke
- coffee \rightarrow c-o-ff-ee
- boat \rightarrow b-oa-t
Is it working?

- For children who have already developed language and literacy skills (good linguistic ability)
- For those who have better lipreading/speechreading skills
- For those who have the ability to use and form English lip-patterns
- More supportive for writing words (spellings) than for decoding words (reading)
- Some children still prefer using visual memory of whole words to read/write.