Fluency at a glance

Reading Fluency

For every adult in school who listens to children read.

WHAT FLUENCY IS

Reading the right words, without effort, so that it sounds like talking.

PILLAR ONE

Accuracy

The right word.

Reading the word on the page, not a guess or a near miss. 95% – about one error in twenty words – is the level a child can learn from.

PILLAR TWO

Automaticity

No effort.

Knowing the word on sight, without stopping to work it out. That leaves the child's attention free for what the sentence means.

PILLAR THREE

Prosody

The right sound.

Phrasing, smoothness and expression: where the voice pauses, which words get the weight, the rise and fall.

WHY IT MATTERS

One pool of attention

A reader is doing two jobs at once: getting the words off the page, and making sense of them. Whatever goes on the first isn't left for the second.

That is why a child who can decode can still stall around Year 3, when texts get longer and the effort catches up with them.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Fluency isn't speed

Push for pace on its own and accuracy and expression go with it. Words correct per minute (WCPM) are a sign of automaticity, never the goal.

"Read it as well as you can. It's not about being fast."

THE NINE STAGES

Where to expect each child

STAGE	EXPECTED BY	TO ACHIEVE IT
Birch	Reception, summer	**95%+ accuracy, any speed**
Willow	Year 1, December	**31+ WCPM**
Hazel	Year 1, summer	**46+ WCPM**
Yew Entry	Year 2, autumn	**46+ WCPM**
Yew	Year 2, spring and summer	**61+ WCPM**
Chestnut	Year 3	**76+ WCPM**
Oak	Year 4	**91+ WCPM**
Sycamore	Year 5	**111+ WCPM**
Cedar	Year 6	**131+ WCPM**

Above Birch, every stage also needs 95%+ accuracy in the same read.

HOW TO HEAR IT

Listen to them read

Two to three minutes, one child, a passage they haven't read before. Count the words read correctly in a minute, check the accuracy, and listen for phrasing, smoothness and expression.

THE RULE

95%, in the same read

A child has achieved a stage when, on that stage's passage, they reach its words correct per minute and read at least 95% of the words correctly – both in the same read.

94.6% is below 95: try the stage below.

NOT A RIVAL

Fluency and phonics

Phonics teaches children to decode. Fluency practice makes decoding fast enough to disappear, so the reading feels easier.

From **The Reading Fluency Handbook** by Simon Sharp · Training for your staff: **readingfluency.co.uk/training**

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