

# Pilot study of Jolly Phonics in Sierra Leone: 2012-14

## Overview

Jolly Phonics is the world's leading synthetic phonics programme. With Jolly Phonics the pupils are first taught the 42 letter sounds of English at a fast pace. At the same time, they are taught how to 'blend' those sounds together to read words (so d-o-g makes 'dog'), write words by segmenting the word into its sounds, and correctly form the letters for those sounds. The letter sounds are taught alongside culturally appropriate stories, songs, and actions that make learning the sounds both memorable and fun. The success of Jolly Phonics has resulted in it being endorsed for use in all schools in countries such as the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago and recommended by the government in other countries, such as the UK and Nigeria.



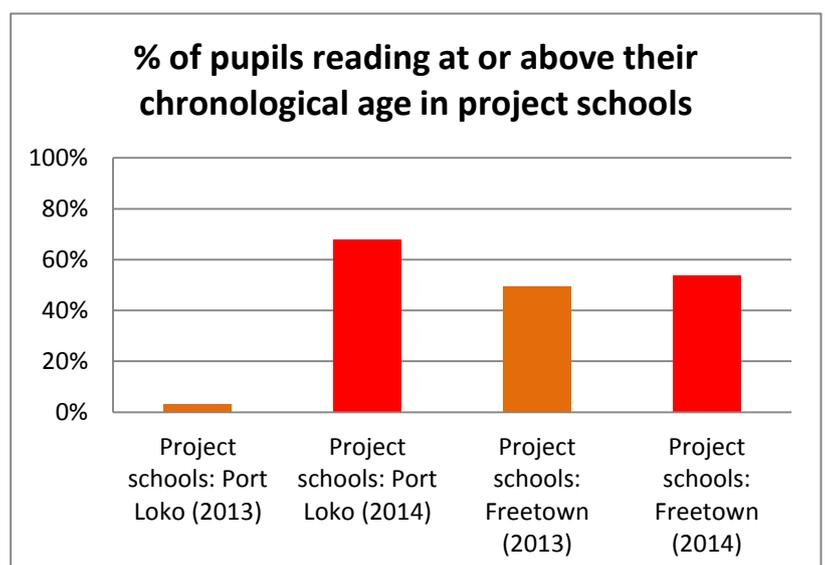
In collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone, Universal Learning Solutions (ULS) and the publishers of Jolly Phonics, Jolly Learning, piloted Jolly Phonics in Grade 1 in three urban schools in Freetown and three rural schools in Port Loko. The project began in September 2012 with two days of training in Jolly Phonics for the teachers, however due to the teachers not receiving the Jolly Phonics materials until late in the year the implementation of the project was poor. In the second year of the project additional Jolly Phonics training and materials were provided, which alongside regular school monitoring, resulted in much improved implementation and outcomes. A representative from Conforti Community Aid Organisation and a designated Jolly Phonics Desk Officer from the Ministry of Education managed the project and completed termly monitoring visits to the schools.

## Method

A comparison method was used comparing reading outcomes for Grade 1 pupils in 2014 with the previous Grade 1 cohort in the same project schools. The pupils were assessed using the 'Young Group Reading Test', with these assessments being conducted by a trained tester from Fourah Bay Teachers' College. Penny Amott, Lecturer in Primary Education at the Institute of Education in UK, advised on the assessment design and completed the analysis of the pilot study.

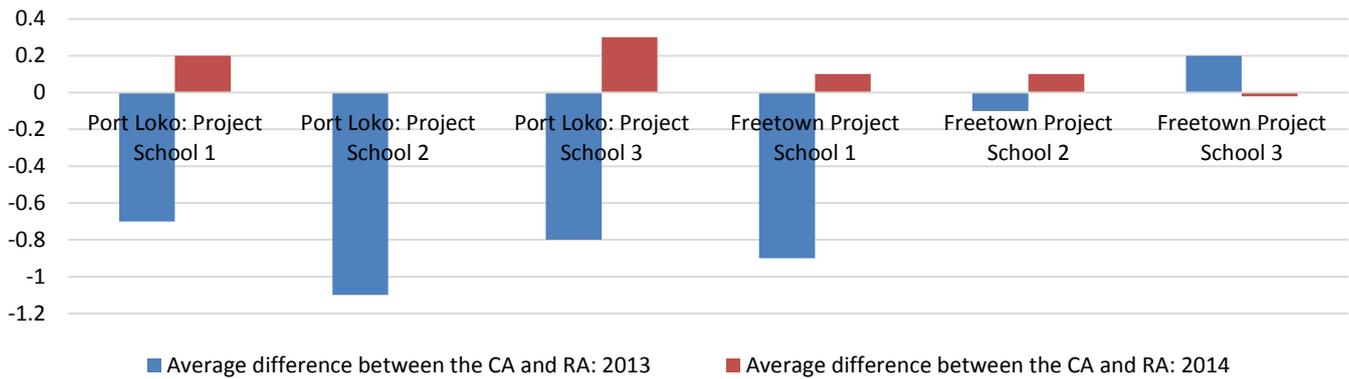
## Summary of results

- In 5 out of 6 of the schools using Jolly Phonics, the % of pupils reading at or above their chronological age increased between 2013 and 2014.
- In 5 out of 6 of the project schools, pupils were on average reading well below age related expectations in 2013. In all 5 of these schools this trend was reversed in 2014, where on average the pupils were reading above their age related expectation<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> In the sixth school, the class teacher left the school resulting in the pupils not being regularly taught Jolly Phonics by a trained teacher

## Average difference between reading age (RA) and chronological age (CA) at each project school



### Observations/findings for pilot study

There were a number of factors that enabled these improved outcomes in pupils' reading ability:

- Training in Jolly Phonics:** sufficient teacher training is essential to enable teachers to be able to deliver the programme successfully, with a minimum of 3 days proving to be most effective.
- Provision of teaching materials from the beginning of the programme:** the impact of not having teaching materials available for the whole of the first year of the project, despite being trained in their use, was clearly demonstrated through the improved outcomes in 2014 compared to 2013.
- Regular teaching of Jolly Phonics:** it is recommended that Jolly Phonics should be taught at least 3 times of the week, and ideally daily. The monitoring team observed this happening at the schools which had the improved pupil outcomes. The lower than expected results at the sixth school was due to staffing changes impacting on frequency of Jolly Phonics lessons.
- Regular monitoring of the programme by an external team:** the regular external monitoring of the schools, through lesson observations, work scrutiny and discussions with the headteacher, in the second year of the pilot significantly increased the effectiveness of the programme. This monitoring ensured the teachers were implementing the programme correctly as well providing ongoing recommendations and improvement.



*Jolly Phonics training in Freetown*

### Next steps

This pilot study has demonstrated the effectiveness of Jolly Phonics in improving reading outcomes of Grade 1 children. Through an exciting partnership with the publishers of Jolly Phonics, Universal Learning Solutions is able to offer Jolly Phonics training and materials to all primary schools across Sierra Leone (see box for details). ULS, along with its partner organisations, hope to build on the success of this pilot by implementing Jolly Phonics across Sierra Leone and therefore make a significant contribution to furthering literacy levels throughout the country.

### Jolly Phonics offer

Through this valuable and exciting partnership with the publishers of Jolly Phonics, ULS is able to offer:

- Free Jolly Phonics Black and White Pupil Books 1 and 2 for an entire cohort of government Primary 1 pupils.
- Free Jolly Phonics Black and White Teacher's Book for every Primary 1 and 2 teacher, head teacher and trained official.
- Free training for Primary 1 and head teachers – trainers' fees and transport.
- Free licence to use Jolly Phonics DVD on State TV
- Free licence to print the Jolly Phonics materials when the donations have all been used.