



Phonics Policy

Date of approval by SLT: November 2023

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Rationale

At Oak Church of England Primary School, we strive to ensure that all children become confident, fluent readers and writers. We have high expectations of all children and the aim of the phonics policy is to ensure they have a firm foundation on which to build reading and writing skills.

High quality phonics teaching which secures the crucial skills of sound/ word recognition that, once mastered, enable children to read fluently and automatically enabling them to concentrate on the meaning of the text. We teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme.

Aims

We aim to:

- Deliver high quality, systematic phonics lessons
- Deliver a consistent approach to phonics across all year groups and key stages
- Enable children to become fluent readers, having secured word building and recognition skills, by the end of Key Stage One
- Model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum.
- Focus on language development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.
- Ensure that the children apply phonic knowledge as their first approach to reading and spelling, even though all words do not conform to regular phonic patterns, with the ultimate goal being 'automatic and effortless reading and writing'
- Ensure that the children are taught high frequency words that do not conform to regular phonic patterns (common exception words)
- Ensure that children have opportunities to read texts and words that are within their phonic capabilities as early as possible, even though all words may not be entirely decodable by the children unaided
- Encourage the children to attempt to spell words for themselves, within the range of their phonic knowledge, by building an individual repertoire and the confidence and strategies to attempt the unfamiliar.
- Help the children to apply the skill of blending phonemes in order to read words
- Help the children to segment words into their constituent phonemes in order to spell words
- Maintain high expectations of all children, enabling them to achieve their full potential

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Phonics teaches children to identify sounds (phonemes) that make up a word and teaches how to write each sound down (grapheme) in order to spell words. During a phonic session, 3 main things are taught.

1. GPCs

This stands for grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This means that children are taught all the phonemes in the English language and the ways of writing them down. Sounds are taught in a particular order, as prescribed by Little Wandle.

2. Blending

This is when children say the phonemes that make up a word and are able to merge these together until they can hear what the word is. This is a vital skill in order to read words.

3. Segmenting

This is the opposite of blending. Children here say the word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This is a vital skill in being able to spell words.

Delivery of Phonics

Foundations for Phonics in Nursery

We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'.

These include:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems
- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- attention to high-quality language.
- We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2

- We teach phonics for 25 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- In order to ensure full coverage of the programme, additional daily sessions are delivered, as necessary, for those children who need extra support to keep up
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics screening check. These children need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen.
- Children in Year 2 who have passed the Phonics screening check and are confident and fluent readers, access the Little Wandle Spelling programme. This programme provides a seamless link from Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised to learning spelling in Year 2 by building on children's knowledge of the alphabetic code and teaching them how to spell with confidence. Children then learn foundational spelling concepts in the Bridge to spelling that they will apply in the Spelling units.
- We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress:
 - Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
 - Children in Year 1 review Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

- Sounds taught should be ‘pure’ ie. ‘b’, not ‘buh’ as this is central to phonic teaching and ability to recognise sounds in words. During teaching, pupils should be able to clearly see the adult’s mouth in order learn correct pronunciation of sounds.
- Children are to be taught that the number of graphemes in a word always corresponds to the number of phonemes. This greatly aids spelling. Sound buttons and segmenting fingers are used in phonics teaching to illustrate this.
- Letter names are to be introduced and modelled when recalling and sharing how words are spelled.
- Wordless books are used until children can confidently blend sounds together to read words independently. Only when children are able to blend will books with words be accessed.
- Phonics should be supported by home reading; children will read and take home books that are within their phonic capabilities. They will have practiced and explored this book in school before confidently reading this at home. These books are sent home as soon as phonics starts alongside a ‘love of reading’ book to share with family.

Planning and Lesson Structure

At Oak C of E Primary school, we follow Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised scheme. Our expectations of progression are aspirational yet achievable. Children who are not keeping up with their peers should be given additional practice immediately through keep-up sessions.

- The progression is organised so that children are taught from the simple to more complex GPCs, as well as taking into account the frequency of their occurrence in the most commonly encountered words.
- All the graphemes taught are practised in words, sentences, and later on, in fully decodable books.
- Children review and revise GPCs and words, , in order to move this knowledge into their long-term memory. The spiralling curriculum, which includes periods of review, ensures that all children have adequate time to learn new GPCs, then practise, retrieve and apply their learning, daily, weekly and across terms and years so it moves into the long-term memory and reading becomes automatic and fluent.
- The structure of a session depends upon what phase is being delivered, however, every phase is taught through three parts –
 - ‘Revisit and Review’
GPCs, words and Tricky Words
 - ‘Teach and Practise’
GPCs, Oral blending, reading new words
 - ‘Practice and Apply’
Reading a sentence/Writing spellings and sentences

Phase Timings

Phase	Timing
2	Reception Autumn term
3	Reception Spring term
4	Reception Summer term
5	Year 1
Phase 5 Review	Year 2 Autumn 1

Bridge to Spelling	Year 2 Autumn 2
Spelling Units	Year 2 Spring and Summer term

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach phonics, so we have the same expectations of progress. We all use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.
- Weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.
- Lesson templates, Prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- The Reading Leader and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Daily Keep-up in Reception and Key Stage 1

- Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. Keep-up lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning.

Rapid Catch Up in Key Stage 2

- Every child in Key Stage 2 who cannot read at age-related expectations needs urgent targeted support so that they can access the curriculum and enjoy reading as soon as possible.
- Little Wandle Rapid Catch-up mirrors the main phonics programme but has a faster pace to help children catch up quickly.
- Little Wandle Rapid Catch-up ensures plenty of repeated practice in blending, word reading and spelling in each lesson, using a range of activities
- Children will learn the meaning of the words that they read, we provide simple definitions or contextualising sentences for words to support this.
- By the end of the programme children will be reading with enough fluency and accuracy to access the curriculum in class, and to read with enjoyment and understanding.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions

In Reception, we teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week and these:

- are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children.
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge informed by assessments and book matching grids.
- are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

- Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:
 - Decoding
 - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression.
 - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.
- In Reception these sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.
- In Years 1 and 2, children have daily reading practice sessions and continue to use this structure to teach reading.

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

- Assessment for learning is used:
 - daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support
 - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- Summative assessment for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 is used:
 - every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
 - by SLT and scrutinised through the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place
- A placement assessment is used:
 - with any child new to the school in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.
- Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - in Year 1 and Year 2, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Key Stage 2, when they are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. For Year 1 children, this is when they read the final fluency assessment at 60–70+ words per minute. Older children can exit the Rapid Catch-up programme when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at age-related expectations. After exiting their programme, children do not need to read any more fully decodable books.
- Rapid Catch-Up assessment is used
 - with any child new to the school in Key Stage 2 and above to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.
 - Children in Key Stage 2 are assessed through:
 - the Rapid Catch-up initial assessment to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan appropriate teaching
 - the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching
 - the Rapid Catch-up fluency assessments when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books for age 7+.

- Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.
- Half termly PSC practice tests are undertaken by every child in Year 1 and those in Year 2 who did not pass the PSC in Year 1.
- Scores are tracked to ensure children are targeted and progress is made.
- Alien words are incorporated into daily sessions from Autumn 2. This is increase exposure to such words in readiness for the statutory test. Real, decodable words remain the focus and priority for daily sessions.