



# Phonics and early reading policy

## Matlock & Dales Primary Partnership



Date	Narrative	Minute Number	Review Date
October 2023 Read and agreed by all staff 24.10.23	NEW! Revised in light on introduction of validated phonics scheme and following training on 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2022.  Amendments to the L&W policy are highlighted in blue.	Not applicable as a school curriculum policy	



## Contents

1. Legal Framework
2. The context of our schools
3. Intent
4. Implementation
5. Teaching reading
6. Impact

## Appendix 1: Key features of effective phonics teaching



## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2013) 'English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2'
- DfE (2021) 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following policies and programmes of study:

- Book Level banding guided used across the partnership
- Each school's statutory Early Years policy
- Each school's Early Years curriculum
- Reading policy
- Partnership SEND policy
- Each school's Writing policy (incorporates transcription – both handwriting and spelling)

## 2. The context of our schools: **All Saints' CE Infant, All Saints' CE Junior, Darley Churchtown CE Primary, St. Giles CE Primary and Bakewell C of E Infant schools**

It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background. Our children arrive at each of our schools with a wide and varying range of pre-school experiences (if any). Too many children arrive with little phonetic knowledge and lower than expected communication and language skills.

## 3. Intent

### Phonics (reading and spelling)

Staff in each of our schools believe that *all* of our children can become fluent readers and writers.

*Reading is at the heart of the curriculum; we enable all children to be fluent, confident, lifelong readers who understand what they have read.*

*Our children are able to write with control, clarity and confidence to not only be understood, but also to flourish.*

This is why we teach reading and writing through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme.

We start teaching phonics in Reception from the very first day and all staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, consistently follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression](#). This ensures all children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.



Vocabulary is displayed in the room that matches the phonemes that the children have been taught that term. This vocabulary is added to throughout the year so that the children are able to know more and remember more.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. Staff in each school 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. We have a strong focus on language development for our children because we know and understand that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

## Comprehension

Each of our schools regards reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave their setting for the next stage in learning, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

## 4. Implementation

### Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 20 minutes a day, every single day. In Reception, we build from shorter 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.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 1 of the Autumn term.
- 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 Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.
  - This is clearly defined and mapped out in the partnership Book Band Level guide which is available on each school's website.

### Daily keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice in [Early Years and Year 1](#) 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 terminology, but in *smaller steps with more repetition*, so that every child secures their learning. The first priority for all additional adults is phonics and reading.
- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 or 3 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.



- If any child in Year 3 to 6 has gaps in their phonetic knowledge when reading (identified as anyone reading on gold or below) or when writing (identified via daily assessment and LW assessment screener), we will:
  - Directly teach the children 'in the moment';
  - plan phonics 'catch-up' lessons to address specific reading/writing gaps. These short, sharp lessons last 10 minutes and take place at least three times a week, led by a trained member of staff.

## 5. Teaching reading at All Saints'

### Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions at least three times a week. This matches our agreed expectations as outlined in our Guided Reading policy.
- These sessions:
  - are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
  - use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids (on pages 11–20 of ['Application of phonics to reading'](#)).
  - 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 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 **no later than** 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 Year 1 these sessions are at least three times a week.
- In Year 2 we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

### Home reading

- An appropriate decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. This is an [expectation of the National Curriculum programme of study](#).
  - We support our children to [reread these books to build up their fluency and confidence in word reading](#).
  - Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children.
  - We use the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources](#) to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops.



- Staff in Early Years and Year 1 promote the sounds which are being taught every half term as part of their class newsletter.

### Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics keep-up sessions and/or NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention) read their reading practice book to an adult daily.
- Children across the school who have been identified as needing additional support in phonics have the opportunity to access the [Nessy](#) program with a trained adult.

### Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our [partnership of schools](#) has been trained to teach reading, so we have [shared](#) expectations of progress. [Staff across our schools](#) 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 English lead and all members of the partnership's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) use the 'seven features of effective phonics practice' to regularly monitor and [support](#) teaching;
- [Class teachers](#), the English leader and SLT use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

### Ensuring reading for pleasure

*'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.'*  
(OECD 2002)

*'The will influences the skill and vice versa.'*  
(OECD 2010)

We value reading for pleasure highly and we continue to work hard as a federation of schools to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.

- We read to children every day. We carefully choose these books using our agreed list of [classic texts and must reads](#). We do this as we want [all of our](#) children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at each school and our local community, as well as books that open windows into other worlds and contrasting cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. We [carefully](#) curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.



- In Reception and Key Stage 1, children have access to their reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed. High quality texts are used in all areas of continuous provision within Early Years and language is promoted in all of the continuous provision across Key Stage 1.
- Children have a home reading record when they start school. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school. Staff write in this to share when they have read with the child.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (book fairs, author visits and workshops, national events such as World Book Day).

## 6. Impact

### Assessment

**Appropriate** assessment is used to monitor progress, **inform teaching** 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 immediate keep-up support;
  - weekly in the review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessment** 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.
- **Nonsense Words:**
  - To check children can use their phonics skills and haven't just learnt words as sight words we use 'nonsense' or 'pseudowords'.
  - These are words made up of the sounds the children know at each relevant phase but not real words e.g. at phase 2 a child may be shown the word ket at phase 5 the word may be zote.

### Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check (PSC). Any child not passing the check re-sits this in Year 2.

### Ongoing assessment for catch-up









## Key features of effective phonics teaching

### Seven features of effective phonics practice

Through the English Hubs Programme, seven key features have been identified as characterising phonics teaching in highly successful schools, no matter which validated programme is being used. These are:

1. Direct teaching in frequent, short bursts
2. Consistency of approach:
  - Routines
  - Terminology
  - Assessment
3. Secure, systematic progression in phonics learning [using the agreed curriculum planning from Little Wandle](#).
4. Maintaining pace of learning [using the agreed curriculum planning from Little Wandle](#).
5. Providing repeated practice
6. Application of phonics using matched decodable books.
7. Early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective keep-up support.

#### 1. Direct teaching in frequent, short bursts *every day*

Phonics is a specific, defined body of knowledge. Children learn this most effectively if we use direct teaching from the earliest stages.

Phonics is also powerful knowledge. It opens up the potential of reading and so much other learning, too. Children are at an advantage if they are taught phonics efficiently and as early as possible in their learning journey.

Considering the young age of the children, regular short bursts of direct teaching are most effective, although these do not necessarily need to be of a particular duration.

All lessons involve direct teaching and daily lessons follow the weekly content grids. Each lesson generally takes 20–30 minutes, depending on the age and stage of the children being taught.

#### 2. Consistency of approach

By consistent, we are referring to:

- ✓ Consistent terminology: Vocabulary used during direct instruction follows the LW weekly teaching sequences.
- ✓ Consistent routines, established with effective teaching of phonics from Day 1.



- ✓ Consistent Keep Up: provided by trained adult
- ✓ Consistent resources: physical resources available if appropriate and organised by teaching sequence.
- ✓ Consistent access to sounds available and displayed ready for reference; mark marking opportunities; directed sounds and sorting
- ✓ Consistent access to the Grow the code on the wall and on the tables
- ✓ Consistent use of phonics books in Autumn 1 in Year 1
- ✓ Consistent access to deliberate practice outside of school as part of weekly practice

To support the necessary consistency:

- All teachers have watched the 'How to' videos
- All teachers refer to the 'Prompt cards', in preparation for teaching.
- Senior management monitors phonics teaching, with a focus on consistency (see the final page of this policy which sets out our non-negotiables against Teachers' Standards).

### 3. Secure, systematic progression in phonics learning

It is essential for progression in phonics learning to cover:

- all the phonemes of English words;
- correct pronunciation of the phonemes;
- all commonly occurring grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs);
- the correct formation of all graphemes;
- blending for reading;
- segmenting for writing;
- the sequenced learning of appropriate tricky words.

Our carefully chosen SSP provides a clear sequence that enables children to begin to read and write simple words, phrases and sentences as early as possible. We understand that our SSP enables us to fully cover the statutory content within the Early Years Statutory Framework and the National Curriculum.

The programme provides a full progression through all commonly occurring GPCs, working from simple to more complex, and taking into account the frequency of their occurrence in the most commonly encountered words.

By providing daily lessons, and by consistently following our daily curriculum, staff ensure the secure, systematic progression required.

### 4. Maintaining pace of learning

Children need to learn to read as quickly as reasonably possible, so they can move from learning to read to reading to learn.



We understand that this includes reaching national standards by the required times (for example in the phonics screening check). This means children should successfully cover the full phonic progression during Early Years and Year 1 so the pace of learning needs to reflect this.

However, this needs to be balanced by our understanding (backed by recent research) that children do not cope well if they have to learn too many new things at the same time. Pace of learning is therefore also about spacing out new learning to avoid overload, and to allow time for repetition and consolidation, so that learning becomes fully embedded in long-term memory.

Optimum pacing is a balance between these two considerations.

In Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, the weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme. The pace allows for full coverage of all aspects of the progression, in a cumulative way, without adding too many elements of new learning at any one time. It also allows for significant periods of practice, consolidation and revision.

For full effectiveness, it is therefore important that neither teaching nor learning are allowed to drift too far behind the pace set. Equally, it will be unhelpful for the set pace to be exceeded, as this is likely to result in overload for many children. Any temptation to leave out periods of consolidation and revision should also be resisted.

## **5. Providing repeated practice**

The ultimate goal of teaching phonics is that children read fluently, recognising most words instantly and using phonics to decode any unknown words.

This means that phonics knowledge needs to be embedded in long-term memory so that its application becomes automatic.

Repeated, spaced practice is by far the most effective way of transferring knowledge from short- to long-term memory. Effective phonics teaching offers repeated practice at the point of learning and returns to practise the same elements again at intervals over an extended period.

*Practice makes permanent.*

The consistent experience of effective schools using the major programmes is that children do not find repeated practice tedious as long as they are engaged with the learning process.

Delivery through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised.

The programme builds repeated practice into all lessons, as modelled in the 'How to' videos. The lessons then return several times to further practise and consolidate learning.



It is important that teachers do not shy away from repeated practice or curtail it for fear of becoming tedious. This does not happen if children are fully engaged in the learning. Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised promotes children's engagement in learning through:

- teacher energy and enthusiasm
- extensive interaction between teachers and children in lessons
- generous praise and encouragement
- building on and celebrating success.

## **6. Application of phonics using matched decodable books**

All major phonics programmes use fully decodable reading books for children to practise and apply phonic knowledge. It is a requirement of the National Curriculum. More importantly though, it gives children the vital opportunity to practise the phonic skills they are learning without the distraction of words they have not yet learned to decode.

To be effective **we ensure that** our decodable books:

- are exactly matched to the phonics progression of the programme used
- present only words made up of GPCs learned to that point
- include tricky words only as they are introduced in the programme
- are used exclusively when children are practising reading and not mixed in with books that are not fully decodable at the child's level.

In addition, teachers read and share a wide range of non-decodable quality children's books with their class.

## **7. Early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective keep-up support**

High expectations drive the pace of learning and success built for all children by identifying those having difficulty very early on. These children are then provided with sufficient additional support to help them keep up.

This involves:

- simple but effective continuous assessment, both informal and more formal
- regular progress reviews for all children
- methods of informal support understood by all teachers and teaching assistants, and implemented as soon as necessary
- systems for formal support clearly established and implemented as soon as necessary
- plans and materials for effective support readily to hand and taught well.

Delivery through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised

The 'Keep-up' and 'Assessment' sections of the programme provide:

- teacher guides with full support for one-to-one keep-up sessions for children in Reception, Year 1 and beyond



- 'How to' videos to support one-to-one and group teaching
- templates and weekly grids for daily additional blending practice lessons
- six termly assessments for each year group
- assessment guides that help teachers identify next steps for teaching, advice on how to fill any gaps in learning, and include links to appropriate keep-up materials for children who need urgent additional support.



## 8. Our non-negotiables for all phonics lessons

Teaching Standards		Agreed expectation
1	Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	Phonics and spelling is to be taught every day (from Day 1) to enable reading and writing. Check each day that you have the appropriate resources needed to deliver the learning. Tricky words are practised and repeated every day.
2	Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils	Children will be introduced to a new sounds and appropriate tricky words each week.
3	Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	Monitor and assess children's learning every lesson and use the weekly review lesson to identify children at risk of falling behind. All phonemes are enunciated accurately by everyone (refer to Pure Sounds for guidance on how we enunciate each phoneme). Correct terminology is used by everyone: digraph, split digraph, trigraph, phoneme, grapheme, GPC, GPC chart, sound buttons and talk. Correct letter formation and seating position for writing at all times.
4	Plan and teach well structured lessons	Every session consists of: Review& Revist - Teach - Practise & Apply Adults carefully consider their body position so all children can see and are included. Can they see your mouth? Can you see theirs? Deliver a purposeful, pacy, lesson that requires full participation by all children. Ensure repetiton & practice to enable automaticity. Use routine to lessen cognitive load. This means you should reduce teacher talk. All additional adults will be active participants during the learning to support and assess all children.
5	Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	Monitor and assess children's progress throughout the lessons: make sure you watch their mouths and look out for those who 'echo' their peers. Use catch up and keep up
6	Make accurate and productive use of assessment	Gather feedback to ensure all children have learnt their phonics. By learn we mean they can recall instantly. Use 'Getting Started: Assessment for Learning' resource to support children from LW to ensure all adults carefully observe and support.
7	Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	Praise effort and progress in each lesson (not ability).
8	Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	The environment supports the learning of phonics and tricky words (common exception words).

