

Hempshill Hall Primary School



Phonics and Early Reading Policy 2025

Introduction to Phonics and Early Reading

Pupils should be taught to apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words. respond speedily with the correct sound to graphemes (letters or groups of letters) for all 40+ phonemes, including, where applicable, alternative sounds for graphemes. National Curriculum 2014

To be able to read, pupils need to be taught an efficient strategy to decode words. That strategy is phonics. It is essential that pupils are actively taught and supported to use phonics as the only approach to decoding. Phonic decoding skills must be practised until pupils become automatic and fluent reading is established. Fluent decoding is only one component of reading. Comprehension skills need to be taught to enable pupils to make sense of what they read, build on what they already know and give them a desire to want to read.

From September 2022, Hemphill Hall have been using the government validated systematic synthetic phonics programme (SSP) called 'Little Wandle: Letters & Sounds Revised'. The programme is designed to teach children to read from Reception to Year 1, using the skill of decoding and blending sounds together to form words.

Intent, Implementation, Impact

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

Rationale:

The National Curriculum for reading aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words.
- Respond speedily with the correct sound to graphemes (letters or groups of letters) for all 40+ phonemes, including, where applicable, alternative sounds for graphemes.
- Read accurately by blending sounds in unfamiliar words containing GPCs that have been taught.
- Read common exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound and where these occur in the word.
- Read words containing taught GPCs and -s, -es, -ing, -ed, -er and -est endings.
- Read other words of more than one syllable that contain taught GPCs.
- Read words with contractions [for example, I'm, I'll, we'll], and understand that the apostrophe represents the omitted letter(s).
- Read aloud accurately books that are consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words.
- Re-read these books to build up their fluency and confidence in word reading.

At Hemphill Hall Primary School, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching Little Wandle Foundations in our Nursery and then, from Reception, we follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression](#), which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. We also 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 that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Comprehension

At our school, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, 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.

At Hempshill Hall Primary School we prioritise teaching every child to read, so we have appointed a Reading Leader to lead the early reading programme in our school. The Early reading lead is highly skilled in teaching phonics and reading. She monitors and supports our reading team, to ensure everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Implementation

In order to implement our intent, we have:

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.
- Little Wandle Foundations is aligned to the non-statutory guidance on Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. We use it as part of our wider provision for Communication and Language, and Literacy. It supports children to:
 - develop their phonological awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllables, initial and voice sounds, and oral blending
 - love stories and rhymes, and learn by heart a bank of familiar favourites
 - increase their vocabulary and confidence to talk
 - improve their listening and ability to take part in back-and-forth conversations.
- We believe that the priority in Nursery should be to build the foundations for phonics for all children. Research tells us that disadvantaged children start Nursery behind their more fortunate peers. By leaving formal phonics teaching to Reception, Foundations allows us to devote more time to working with children who need extra help to develop the skills and behaviours that underpin successful reading.

Language and nursery rhymes in Reception

- Research tells us that nursery rhymes can support children to develop their language, their awareness of sounds within words and even their later reading ([Bryant et al. 1989](#)).
- We use the Little Wandle Rhyme time films and accompanying phonological awareness planning to complement and reinforce our Phase 2 teaching.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to full-length lessons 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 2 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 Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child in Reception and Year 1 who needs additional practice has Daily Keep-up support and is taught by a fully trained adult.
- Daily Keep-up lessons follow the Little Wandle progression and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition so that every child secures their learning.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

- Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed. Corresponding summative assessments are carried out to ensure this content is secure.
- Once all the Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.
- We use the Phase 5 review assessment before teaching in Year 2 to identify any children who may need more support when teaching. We reassess after teaching the Phase 5 review.
- Once the Phase 5 review is secure; we teach the Bridge to Spelling before moving to the Spelling units.
- Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers have daily phonics teaching and follow the Rapid Catch-up programme.

Commented [RB1]: all the Year 1 content?

Children in Year 2 to Year 6: Rapid Catch-up

- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above who is not at age-related expectations for 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.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15 to 20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.
- We assess children who are new to our school, new to the country or new to English using the Rapid Catch-up assessments to quickly identify their needs.
- We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge and teach these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- We assess children every four weeks using the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach reading practice sessions three times a week. 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 using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids on pages 11 to 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 have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:
 - **decoding**: teaching children to use phonic knowledge to read words
 - **prosody**: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - **comprehension**: using dialogic talk to help children to understand the text.
- In Reception, these sessions start in Week 4 of teaching at the latest. Initially, children will read wordless books. In these sessions, children review GPCS and are taught blending using teacher-led blending. Once children can blend, they progress onto decodable books matched to their secure phonic knowledge.
- Children read each book three times to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension as well as book behaviours.

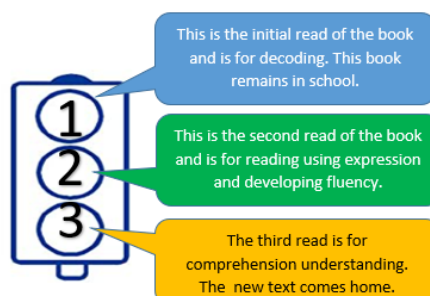
- In Year 2, we ensure children complete reading the core programme decodable books (up to Phase 5 Set 5). To exit the programme, we complete the final fluency assessment to ensure children can read with adequate speed and accuracy: approximately 60 words per minute with 90%+ accuracy.
- Reading in Rapid Catch-up lessons mirrors the core programme. Children following the Rapid Catch-up programme are taught to read using the 7+ fully decodable books. These follow the same progression as the core programme but are more appropriate for older readers.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
 - Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the [Everybody read!](#) resources.
 - 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.

Our expectation in KS1 is that children read at home at least 4 to 5 times per week. Parents, carers, and staff use the home/school diaries to track the three reading practice sessions that take place in school. Staff provide guidance for parents/carers on how to support with reading at home. Teachers/TAs monitor these diaries daily to ensure children are reading at home and to engage with parents/carers on their child's reading journey.

We use a traffic light stamper system to inform parents when 3 reads have been completed by their child in school. It is after these three sessions children take home the decodable reading book home to read.



Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Daily Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book regularly to an adult in school.
- We prioritise children who may not have reading support at home or who may not have access to books. We ensure that they have individual reading times with volunteers and staff to share quality children's literature to promote a love of reading.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach reading, 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 uses checklists and templates to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and have gaps in learning.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

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

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We highly value reading for pleasure and work hard as a school to grow our reading for pleasure pedagogy.

- We read aloud to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including those that reflect the children at Hempshill Hall Primary school and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. We carefully select these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- In Nursery/Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free-flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children choose from our range of carefully chosen books to take home and share with an adult. We keep a record of the children's choices, so we get to know them as readers.
- As children progress through school, we take time to get to know them as readers and ensure that we engage in meaningful conversations about the books that they have read. By doing this we can recommend authors and genres of books to expand their interests.
- Nursery children visit the local library termly.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. 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 etc).
- We use the Everybody read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

Impact

Assessment

Through implementing the above, assessments are used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

- **Assessment for Learning (AfL)** is used:
 - daily within class to identify children who require Daily Keep-up support, as well as words and GPCs that need additional teaching
 - to plan repeated practice throughout the day to ensure all children secure learning
 - weekly in the Friday review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessments** are uploaded onto the Little Wandle Assessments Tracker for Reception, KS1 and any children following the programme in KS2.
These are used:
 - to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups
 - by teachers and reading leaders to look at the data of GPCs, word, tricky word and sentence level
 - by reading lead to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers if needed

This Assessment Tracker is colour coded which provides a comprehensive overview of each child's progress. It clearly identifies children on track and those that need immediate support.

Green: Whole class initial teaching, no gaps in GPCs or word reading identified.

Yellow: Immediate daily 'Keep up' for any identified children.

Red: Further additional support for children showing large gaps in their phonic knowledge.

We assess:

- every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be reviewed or retaught
- to establish if learning is secure for more than 70% of children before new content is taught
- to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need

We reassess every three weeks every child who is not on track.

- **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 Years 2 to 6, when they are reading the Phase 5 Set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme*

*Year 2 children can exit the Rapid-Catch-up programme when they can 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.

- A **placement assessment** is used:
 - with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and to plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment- Phonics Screening Check

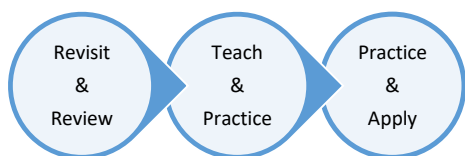
- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check in Summer Term. The Phonics Screening Check (PSC) for Year 1 is a statutory test that checks that children can read words with specific GPCs. As a national test it ensures a certain standard of word reading. Any child not passing the check resits it in Year 2. The Little Wandle progression goes above and beyond the Phonics Screening Check.
- To prepare children for the phonics screening check we carry out phonics screening checks every half term, scores are monitored and for those children who need further support will receive it through additional 1:1 reading sessions.
- For children in KS2 who have not passed the phonics screening check and are still reading decodable texts to support with fluency are supported Little Wandle 'Rapid catch-up 7+ programme. (Rapid catch- up programme includes 50 decodable books 7+ matched exactly to the catch-up programme)

Teaching Methods

All teaching follows the approach outlined in our whole school Teaching and Learning document. Our phonics lessons focus on helping children become confident and proficient readers. Little Wandle is a systematic programme which is explicit, and tailored to the needs of individual learners to ensure a solid foundation in reading, vocabulary and spelling skills.

Phonics Lesson Sequence:

Phonics is taught in a very structured way, using a sequence of Revisit and Review/ Teach and practice/ Practice and Apply. The same teaching prompts, resources, vocabulary and actions are used in all phonics sessions to ensure consistency and continuity. This includes resources displayed in each classroom.



Revisit and Review

In this section we:

- activate prior knowledge
- get the children ready for new learning and reduce cognitive load
- develop fluent reading
- support orthographic mapping (the transference of the sounds and words that have been learned into the orthographic store which leads to automaticity)

Teach and Practice

In this section we explicitly teach a new GPC. We teach:

- pronunciation of the phoneme
- a new grapheme (and the mnemonic if Phase 2, or catchphrase if Phase 3)
- how to orally blend with the new GPC
- how to blend and read words with the new GPC
- how to read a new tricky word

Practice and Apply

In this section:

- we practise and apply the new knowledge from the 'teach' part of the lesson
- we read a caption/sentence which often contain words with the new GPC and often the new tricky word
- we practise spelling words with the new GPC or the new tricky word
- the caption or sentence is ONLY made up of GPCs and tricky words that the children have been taught to this point. (These have already been planned for you in the content grids).

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- All staff at Hemps Hill Primary school have received the Little Wandle initial training (2022) followed by refresher training (2024). Reading with fluency training completed (July 2024).
- Little Wandle membership allows all staff to access a range of webinars, networking and special events. Staff use the annual CPD calendar to book training, relevant to the area they are teaching. (Rapid catch up, SEND, keep up, Reading, Phonics, Fluency, Foundations to phonics, Blending etc)
- All staff have access to the Little Wandle portal and access relevant training for CPD.
- Every teacher and TA in our school has been trained to teach reading, 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 coach teaching ensure teachers/TAs all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.

Resources

Class resources include grapheme mats, large grow the code chart, grow the code mats and support for tricky words. These resources are consistent across school.

SEND

Phonics forms part of the school's curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. We are inclusive and provide learning opportunities that are adapted to meet the needs of all children.

Monitoring

The curriculum leader, alongside SLT and governors, is responsible for monitoring and evaluating phonics delivery and outcomes. This is achieved through, learning walks, pupil voice, tracking assessment data and lesson observations.

Role of the subject leader

- The subject leader, together with the senior leadership team and governors, are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning of phonics across the school.
- The subject leader is responsible for ensuring continuity and progression of phases 2,3,4 & 5.
- The subject leader is responsible for collecting and analysing school data in consultation with the assessment coordinator.
- The subject leader will undertake any relevant training (including termly NST training) and keep abreast of current initiatives.
- The subject leader will regularly deliver CPD for staff in school.
- The subject leader is responsible for the ordering of resources to enable delivery of lessons.
- The subject leader will write a yearly report to the governors.

How can being able to read inspire future career choices?

At Hemphill Hall Primary School, we endeavour to ensure that the ability to read effectively is a fundamental skill that can open up numerous career opportunities and benefits for individuals. We believe that once children are taught how to read, they will then read to learn, giving them access to the treasure house of reading.