



C.E. PRIMARY ACADEMY  
(HANDSWORTH)

# Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Subject Champion: B Haughey

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# Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy Vision Statement

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

At Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy our distinctive Christian values are at the heart of all we do. Through our curriculum and care our children develop independent curiosity, acquire a life-long appetite for learning and become well-rounded individuals, seeking 'hope and a future' for themselves and others.

## 1. Intent

### 1.1 Holy Trinity Curriculum

Our curriculum is about **bringing engagement, fun and enthusiasm** to learning so that our children develop independent curiosity, acquire a lifelong appetite for learning and become well-rounded individuals who achieve their full potential, both personally and academically. Our curriculum starts from the children in our academy and works out.

### 1.2 Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background. This is why we teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Reception and 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. At Holy Trinity, 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.

### 1.3 Comprehension

At Holy Trinity, 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.

As we believe teaching every child to read is so important, Mrs Haughey is our Reading Champion who drives the early reading programme in our school. The Reading Champion is highly skilled at

teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

## 2. Implementation

### 2.1 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. At Holy Trinity, we strive to ensure that these key features are implemented consistently. These are:

- direct teaching in frequent, short bursts
- a consistent approach
- secure, systematic progression in phonics learning
- maintaining the pace of learning
- providing repeated practice
- applying phonics using matched decodable books
- early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective keep-up support.

### 2.2 Foundations for phonics

- During the first week of Reception, 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 all children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

### 2.3 Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We teach phonics for 25-30 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.
- 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.
- The progression has been 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, daily, weekly and across terms and years, in order to move this knowledge into their long-term memory.

- Children need to learn to read as quickly as reasonably possible, so they can move from learning to read, to reading to learn, giving them access to the treasure house of reading.
- Our expectations of progression are aspirational yet achievable by maintaining pace, practice and participation by all children. Children who are not keeping-up with their peers will be given additional practice immediately through Keep-up sessions.

## **2.4 Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read**

- 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.
- 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 urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15-20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

## **2.5 Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week**

- We teach children to read through 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
  - 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 Autumn term, Week 4. They are then continued throughout the Reception year and into Year 1. 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 2 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

## **2.6 Home reading**

- Each week a decodable reading book is taken home to share with the family. These are carefully matched to each child's ability.

- 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.

## 2.7 Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book to an adult daily.

## 2.8 Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher and teaching assistant in our school has been trained to teach phonics and early reading. Therefore, 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 Champion 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.

## 2.9 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 work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.
- Each class has set story times where pupils enjoy listening to a high-quality text read by an adult. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Holy Trinity and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures. Each class has a 'Reading Spine' which lists our non-negotiable texts that will be read by the end of the year. These texts are a mixture of classic texts, diverse texts, fiction, non-fiction and poetry.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. We curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books. They enjoy engaging in sustained independent reading.
- In Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Reception onwards take a reading book home each week which is matched to their ability. KS1 also have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and the adults will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school.
- As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to celebrate the joy of reading through World Book Day and other events.

- The children are given opportunities to develop their reading skills across all curriculum subjects. Therefore, they understand that reading is a skill that can be applied to all that we do.

## 3. Impact

### 3.1 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** 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.
- Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
  - in Year 1, 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. 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.
- 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 plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.
- The Rapid Catch-up assessment is used:
  - with any child new to the school in Year 2 and above to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

### 3.2 Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check in June. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.
- During the Phonics Screening Check, children are asked to read 40 words. Most of these words are real words but some are pseudo-words. Pseudo-words are included to ensure that children are using their decoding skills and not just relying on their memory of words they've read before.

### **3.3 Ongoing assessment for catch-up**

- Children in Year 2 to 6 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+.
- The fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They also assess when children are ready to exit the Rapid Catch-up programme, which is when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute.