



# **Phonics and Reading** **Policy**

**Dated: September 2024**

**Review: September 2025**

## **1.Introduction**

The objective of this policy is to give direction to staff with regard to providing a sufficiently broad and challenging Reading curriculum, ensuring that teaching of reading is of a consistently high standard.

At Firs Primary School we deliver the national curriculum programmes of study for reading at key stages 1 and 2, which consist of two dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension (both listening and reading)

It is essential that teaching focuses on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions; different kinds of teaching are needed for each. Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Underpinning both is the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words. This is why phonics should be emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e., unskilled readers) when they start school. Good comprehension draws from linguistic knowledge (in particular of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world. Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems, and non-fiction.

All pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum. Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds.

## **2.Aims (Intent)**

We intend to:

- Support every child to develop a love of reading, recognising that reading is the key to independent learning.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, children leave us decoding fluently whilst also reading for meaning and with expression.
- Enable all pupils to use a wide range of cueing strategies.

- Systematically track the reading of every child including new arrivals.
- Ensure children access top quality children’s literature appropriate for their age, including literature which champions diversity and has characters and role models from a range of backgrounds and cultures, so all children can find themselves reflected in the books they hear and read.
- Work with parents in partnership to develop children’s reading.
- Ensure that the school environment encourages children to read and love books.

### **3. Organisation (Implementation)**

#### **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 Once the Phase 5 review is secure; we teach the spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Commented [RB1]: all the Year 1 content?

Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers have daily phonics teaching and follow the Rapid Catch-up programme.

### **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'

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 eBook is assigned to the child so they can read it at home to ensure success is shared with the family.

Children who are off the Phonics program choose a book that they would enjoy reading. Teachers are to talk to the children about the suitability of the books, teaching them the skills needed to choose their independent reading books.

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.

In order to celebrate the range of languages in the school and encourage the development of pupils' home languages, the school library has a range of bilingual books in a variety of languages available for children to borrow.

Every child in the school, including those in Foundation Stage 1 and 2, is also given a MyON account. MyON is an online library which enables children to access hundreds of electronic books from home on any electronic device e.g. phones and I pads. MyON has an audio facility which supports early readers and pupils learning English as an Additional Language by exposing them to vocabulary they may not be able to decode themselves. This is particularly helpful for children whose parents have limited or no literacy skills in English and are therefore unable to support them with wider reading at home.

### ***Reading Records***

The school no longer provides individual reading records for pupils as high pupil mobility meant that this was an ineffective use of resources. We trailed paper copies of reading records as 'slips' but this also proved ineffective. Teachers keep written records for each pupil to make notes on 1:1 reading sessions which include next steps and skills demonstrated by the pupil. This supports ongoing assessment for learning. If parents have a concern or query regarding their children's reading, they usually voice this in person or over class Dojo.

Both MyOn and Accelerated Reader provide an electronic record of any books completed by children at home, and the AR short quizzes ensure that pupils are accurately comprehending what they have read. Class teachers can monitor this information and intervene by changing a pupil's reading level or supporting with more appropriate book choices where necessary.

### **Promoting a Love of Reading**

At Firs Primary School we are passionate about instilling a love of reading in every child and so we offer a range of experiences throughout the year to promote reading for pleasure and develop the children's wider understanding of literature. These include:

- Meet the Author visits as part of Derby Book Festival each summer for small groups of Year 2 and KS2 pupils. Books written by the authors are purchased for each class, and for children attending the visits.
- Celebration of World Book Day each year. Each child will receive a book token.
- Hosting the Travelling Book Fair, which enables pupils to purchase books at a discounted rate (and also helps to raise money for the school library).

Every class also has dedicated reading for pleasure time daily, in which the class teacher or TA reads a high-quality text to the class. This means that pupils are exposed to a range of high-quality children's books (including classics) throughout their time at Firs Primary School and they are supported to develop their cultural capital. Class Reader texts are chosen from Pie Corbett's Reading Spine as well as from a selection of texts which champion diversity taken from the 'Diverse Voices – 50 of the Best Children's Books celebrating cultural diversity in the UK' booklist.

Class Reader texts are also supplemented by additional books in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years, where stories tend to be much shorter. NTE classes will use texts from KS1.

We also offer further opportunities for reading at playtimes and lunchtimes by:

- Staffing the library for two hours per day, to ensure that children can access it throughout lunchtimes.
- Providing a 'Reading Shed' on the playground, which provides a cosy space to read and a selection of books at different levels.
- Training 'Reading Champions' who are pupils that love reading and will read to, or with, others at playtimes, and providing Book Packs for them to use on the playground.

#### **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 and SLT use 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).

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



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 Firs 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 curate 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.

Each class visits the local library every half term.

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**

Assessment is 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 Assessments tracker for Reception and Year 1. 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, Reading Leaders and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level
- by SLT to scrutinise and plan how to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers.

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**

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check resits it in Year 2.

### **Training**

Every member of staff completes the 5 training modules as soon as possible after they begin working at the school.

Until this point, they are heavily supported by the reading leader to ensure consistency of approach and skill in phonics teaching across the school.

The reading leader provides further CPD opportunities throughout the year by:

- Modelling and coaching where a training need is identified
- Providing regular 'RAG' rated feedback to teaching staff on observed lessons

Further training will be arranged as and when deemed necessary by the English coordinator in response to subject monitoring. In addition to training from external providers CPD may include signposting to online resources to support subject knowledge, modelling lessons, 1:1 staff coaching.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The monitoring of the standards of children's reading and of the quality of teaching in reading is the responsibility of the English subject leader. The work of the subject leader also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of Reading, being informed about current developments in the subject, and providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.

The English subject leader writes an annual action plan in which she/he evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and indicates areas for further improvement. The English leader has specially allocated, regular management time in order to review evidence of the children's work and undertake lesson observations of teaching across the school.

**Review and Adoption**

This policy will be reviewed annually and was last reviewed by the English Coordinator in September 2024.