

Phonics and Early Reading Policy



Policy developed by Mrs O'Brien (Phonics and Early Reading leader): October 2024

Policy approved by Governors: November 2024



Chair of Governors



Headteacher

Policy shared with staff and shared on the school website: November 2024

'Never settle for less than your best'

PHONICS AND EARLY READING POLICY

Our school motto

Never settle for less than your best.

Our Vision

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, each member of our community will flourish as resilient, respectful and adaptable individuals prepared for life's journey. Along the way we will encourage and inspire each other to continue growing as beacons of light in our own lives and the wider world.

Our Mission Statement

St. George's Central seeks to provide quality education rooted in the Christian faith, serving the spiritual, moral, and educational needs of the community of which it is part.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At St George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. We teach phonics and early reading through '*Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*', which is a systematic and synthetic phonics program that has met the criteria for the government's validation process. We believe that Little Wandle offers a well-structured program which builds on prior knowledge and prioritises the importance of reading and vocabulary development as well as phonics instruction. Following the Little Wandle program phonics teaching begins in Nursery and continues into Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and into KS2 for those children who require it.

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 St George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery 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 school uses the phrase '**Reading, it's a kind of Magic**' as a motto for our school approach to reading. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary and derive understanding from texts they have read. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

Implementation

Foundations for Phonics in Nursery

We utilise the Little Wandle Foundations for Phonics program to direct our teaching around phonics and early reading in both our nurseries. We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations within the Early Years Profile 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.
- attention to high-quality language.

We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 25 minutes every day in Reception and Year 1. Our Reception children begin phonics sessions as soon as they start at our school. For both Reception and Year 1 we follow the Little Wandle Program Overview.

- 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.
- Phonics lessons include opportunities to review previously learnt GPCs, practise blending and learn new GPCs, with practise including reading and writing with relevant GPCs.
- The last lesson of the week is usually a review lesson of the week's previous lessons, in line with Little Wandle plans.

Children in Year 2 follow Little Wandle's Bridge to Spelling scheme which builds on the success of the program in Reception and Year 1. Children in Year 2 who require more direct phonics instruction, in line with that provided to Year 1 children, also receive this.

Interventions to ensure every child learns to read

Any child in Reception or Year 1 who needs additional practise 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.

For children in Year 2 who still require more direct phonics instruction we provide the Rapid Catch Up intervention program. This is in addition to daily phonics lessons that these children receive.

For children in KS2 who still require more direct phonics instruction the Rapid Catch up intervention program is provided. Where appropriate the Rapid Catch Up SEND program for children with SEND is used.

All interventions take place at least three times a week and last for around twenty minutes. Additionally, all the interventions use Little Wandle resources and materials, follow the structures and plans suggested by Little Wandle and are delivered by fully trained adults.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

In Reception and Year 1, 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.
- 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.

These sessions start within the first few weeks of Reception. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practise sessions in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books. Children in Year 2 and KS2 who are accessing the Rapid Catch Up intervention also continue with three reading sessions weekly as part of this program.

Children in Year 2 and KS2 who have passed the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and are no longer receiving direct phonics instruction no longer need to complete the three reading sessions as outlined above. Instead children complete a minimum of four Book Talk sessions weekly which still develop skills in decoding and prosody but with a particular focus on developing comprehension and vocabulary.

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

Children may also complete guided reading sessions and independent comprehension activities within or in addition to their daily English lessons. Children in KS2 also have access to the Reading Plus computer program, which is accessed as part of their activities within school and can also be used to practise reading at home.

Home reading

For children in Reception and Year 1 after three reading sessions have been completed within the school week the decodable reading book children have read in school is then assigned as an ebook for children to complete further practise sessions at home with families. Children also take home a book that they have chosen that is purely for sharing with families to promote reading for pleasure. This is also the case for children in Year 2 and KS2 who are accessing the Rapid Catch Up intervention programs. We use Little Wandle 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.

Children in Year 2 and KS2 who have passed the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and are no longer receiving direct phonics instruction are provided with a physical reading book of a level appropriate to their ability to take home. Children are encouraged to read the book at least three times a week with their families focusing on fluency, expression and comprehension. The Reading Plus computer program can also be used to support reading at home for children in KS2. Information about supporting reading at home is shared with families at workshops and meetings with teachers.

Additional reading support for vulnerable children

Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics 'keep-up' sessions read their reading practise book to an adult daily. This may be via the ebook platform or by reading the physical copy within school. Children in Year 2 and KS2 are also provided with the opportunity to read their book to an adult within school if it is felt that they have not had enough chance to practise at home.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

All teachers and teaching assistants involved with Little Wandle have received relevant training and support to successfully deliver the program. Therefore, we have the same expectations of progress, relative to children's starting points, for all children. 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 program. Lesson templates, prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure staff all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson. The Phonics and Early Reading Leader and other members of the Senior Leadership Team carry out various monitoring activities, focusing on consistency and progress, as part each half termly Improving Learning Calendar. Additionally, the audit and prompt cards, available from Little Wandle, are used to regularly monitor and observe teaching.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

We value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to implement our reading motto: '**Reading, it's a kind of magic**'.

We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at St George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery 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 carefully, refresh them on an ongoing basis and talk about them to encourage children to read a wide range of books. In Nursery and Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day as part of continuous provision. Additionally, children from Nursery and Reception onwards have a home reading record. Parents/carers record comments to share with the adults in school. Adults in school will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school. As the children progress through the school, children are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read. The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. The school library is also open before school from Monday – Thursday and is open for one lunchtime during the school week. Additionally, children across school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events such as book fairs, author visits, workshops and the marking of national events.

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

Impact

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it. Guidance from Little Wandle is always followed in terms of assessing children. Staff in Reception, YEAR 1 and YEAR 2 assess on an ongoing basis who may need 'keep up' as a result of their daily phonics lessons. This is assessed by monitoring how children perform within phonics lessons and within the end of week review sessions.

Children in Reception and Year 1 complete a short phonics assessment within the Little Wandle website roughly every six weeks. This assesses how well children have learnt and understood the learning from the previous six weeks and identifies any gaps in learning that need to be addressed. It also identifies any children needing additional support, what this will entail and suggests groupings for reading practise sessions. Assessments are checked by the Phonics and Early Reading Leader to ensure both their completion and that they are being used effectively to identify and then plug gaps and group children accordingly. This approach is also utilised for children in Year 2 and KS2 who are accessing Rapid Catch Up.

Children in Year 2 and KS2 who have passed the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and are no longer receiving direct phonics instruction are assessed in a variety of ways including ongoing formative assessment during Book Talk sessions as well as summative approaches such as considering performance on independent comprehension activities.

All children in KS1 and KS2 also complete reading tests termly which form part of the whole school assessment calendar. Attainment and progress in relation to this is considered as part of class teachers' completed progress forms and is discussed during progress meetings with members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Statutory assessment

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

Monitoring

Teaching staff monitor their children's progress through a variety of approaches such as questioning, observation, discussion, teacher assessment, marking work and formal assessment. The teaching of phonics and early reading is also monitored by the Phonics and Early Reading Leader and other members of the Senior Leadership Team through book scrutinies, lesson observations and drop-ins, monitoring of short and medium term planning, interviews with children, discussion during staff meetings, learning walks and tracking children's progress in formal assessments.

Role of the Phonics and Early Reading Leader

The role includes:

- Ensuring continuity and progression from year group to year group.
- Advising staff and arranging and delivering in-service training where appropriate. This will be in-line with the current School Impact Plan and within the confines of the school budget.
- Advising and supporting colleagues in the implementation and assessment of Phonics and Early Reading throughout the school.
- Assisting with the acquisition and maintenance of resources required for the effective teaching of phonics and early reading. Again this will be within the confines of the school budget.
- The monitoring of Phonics and Early Reading, in different ways, to ensure for example, that planned lessons are being delivered and that fidelity to the scheme is apparent throughout school. This will be done in accordance with half termly Improving Learning Calendars.
- Analysing data from assessments to inform future whole-school actions, strategies and planning.
- Keeping up to date with changes to the curriculum and/or any new initiatives.
- Regular meetings/updates with the governor responsible for Phonics and Early Reading.

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

The role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that:

- There is a current policy statement and curriculum for the teaching of Phonics and Early Reading.
- Phonics and Early Reading is included in the basic curriculum.
- Sufficient time and resources are devoted to Phonics and Early Reading to enable the school to meet its legal obligations and to deliver quality Phonics and Early Reading teaching.

The role of the Headteacher

It is the Headteacher's duty to ensure that:

- Phonics and Early Reading is provided as part of an English education in accordance with the Governors' Agreed Syllabus for all registered children at the school.
- Appropriate staffing and resources are made available to meet the aims and objectives of Phonics and Early Reading within the school.

Conclusion

At St George's Central CE Primary School and Nursery we believe that it is our professional duty to share this policy with all new members of staff, parents and carers on request. The policy will be reviewed in the light of experiences, new developments or requirements. The leader will discuss any aspect of this policy on request

'Never settle for less than your best'

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' John 8:12