

PHONICS POLICY

The Pines School



April 2022

“At one magical moment in your early childhood, the page of a book – that string of confused, alien ciphers – shivered into meaning. Words spoke to you, gave up their secrets; at that moment, whole universes opened. You became, irrevocably, a reader.”

Alberto Manguel

Intent

At the Pines, our vision for phonics is that our youngest children will discover a love of both reading and writing and will be equipped with the skills to become successful readers and writers.

We aim to:

- Equip children with the phonic skills required to become fluent, confident readers who have a genuine love of reading.
- Equip children with the phonic skills required to become successful writers, able to express themselves effectively using print (including the ability to spell at an age appropriate level).
- Ensure that every child achieves their BEST through fun, pacey and carefully planned phonic sessions, meeting the needs of all learners.
- Do everything possible to ensure that no child is 'left behind' in their journey to becoming a reader through high-quality, targeted additional support.
- Apply phonic knowledge in teaching across all aspects of the curriculum.
- Elevate and explicitly teach new vocabulary.
- Empower all staff to teach phonics skilfully and effectively.

Implementation

We teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Nursery and 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.

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. As outlined in our curriculum driver, Oracy, 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.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Phonics Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Foundations for phonics in Nursery

- We provide high quality child-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. We supplement these with a small number of targeted adult-led experiences. 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.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day, using predominantly whole class teaching. 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.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins early in 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.

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 additional 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 phonic knowledge when reading or writing, we plan phonics 'catch-up' lessons to address specific reading/writing gaps.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- In reception and Year One 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 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 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 early in the Autumn term. 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.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is shared at home using an e-library to ensure success is shared with the family.
 - 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.

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 5 times per week.

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 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.

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.

- 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 The Pines 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 curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- In Nursery, Reception and Year One, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Nursery onwards 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.
- The school library is made available for classes to use. 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).

Beyond Year 1

Children in Year 2 continue using Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised before transitioning to the spelling scheme, Sounds and Syllables. Key knowledge, vocabulary and strategies from Little Wandle

Letters and Sounds Revised feeds into Sounds and Syllables seamlessly and there is a transition plan for children in Year 2. Children in KS2 learn spelling patterns using the Sounds and Syllables programme.

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.
- The [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised placement assessment](#) is used:
 - with any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and to provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.
- Little Wandle phonics and reading lessons thoroughly prepare children for these assessments.

Ongoing assessment for catch-up

- Children in Year 2 to 6 are assessed through:
 - their teacher's ongoing formative assessment
 - the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds* placement assessment
 - the appropriate half-termly assessments.

Impact

Children at The Pines School leave KS1 as fluent and confident readers, fully prepared to meet the reading and spelling demands of the KS2 curriculum. Children view themselves as readers who read both for pleasure and to find out about the world around them. Throughout their time in EYFS and KS1, children access a wide and varied selection of high-quality books which spark their interests and imaginations and inspire them as readers and writers. This lays strong foundations for their growing love of reading and thoughtful engagement with high-quality texts in KS2. Children view themselves as writers who can confidently have a go at spelling unfamiliar and challenging words. They have a growing vocabulary and are interested in new words they come across in their reading. They use new vocabulary in their written work and in their verbal communication. Those children who find reading and phonics more difficult in the early stages are given timely and effective support to enable them to make good progress, in-line with or better than their peers. All staff understand how to teach phonics using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Scheme, leading to consistency in vocabulary and teaching methods; this reduces children's cognitive load and allows them to make good progress in their phonics learning. It also lays strong foundations for children to progress onto the KS2 spelling programme, Sounds and Syllables. Parents and carers regularly engage in reading with children at home to support their learning in school. They understand how they can help their children in the journey to becoming fluent and confident readers. Percentages of children who pass the phonics screening check and who achieve ARE in KS1 Reading SATs assessments increases year on year.

