

# PHONICS POLICY

*St. Joseph's  
Catholic Primary  
School, a Voluntary  
Academy*

## St. Joseph's Catholic primary School

### Phonics Policy

*“Trusting in God, creating tomorrow, helping today.”*

#### Intent

As a Catholic Academy, religious education and faith development are at the heart of our school curriculum developing the Catholicism and spirituality of our pupils.

At St Joseph's Primary School, we see phonics as a specific, defined body of knowledge. Children learn most effectively if we use direct teaching.

At St Joseph's Primary School, we follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* principles and practice of high quality phonics. This follows:

- RTPA (Revisit, Teach, Practice and Apply) format for every phonics session taught daily from Reception through to Year 2.
- Short daily phonics sessions for Nursery looking at the foundations for phonics focussing on:
  - Phonemic awareness
  - Tuning into sounds
  - Oral blending
  - Learning new rhymes and action rhymes
  - Sharing high quality stories and poems
- A sequence of 30minute planned daily sessions for all children from the second week of Reception and throughout Key Stage 1.
- 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 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Although phonics is taught as a whole class following a set sequence of lessons, additional intervention may be used to support the progress of some groups of children.

The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised phonics scheme identifies seven key characteristics for phonics teaching to be highly successful in schools, at St Joseph's we follow these to ensure children are accessing effective phonics teaching and practice throughout their phonics journey. These are:

- Direct teaching in frequent, short bursts.

## Phonics Policy

- Consistency of approach
- Secure, systematic progression in phonics learning
- Maintaining pace of learning
- Providing repeated daily practice
- Application of phonics using matched decodable books
- Early identification of children at risk of falling behind, linked to the provision of effective keep-up support.

## **Implementation**

### **Foundation for Phonics in Nursery:**

At St Joseph's 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 focussed listening and attention, including oral blending
- Attention to high-quality language

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

Children in nursery are exposed daily to short, well-paced phonics sessions and games, which enable them to develop and practice skills in oral blending, tuning into sounds, recalling well-known nursery rhymes and songs.

Some children may be ready for Phase 2 teaching in Summer term of nursery, if this is the case this will always be done in consultation with the school's Phonics and Early Reading lead.

### **Phonics teaching in Reception:**

We teach phonics daily for 30minutes in Reception. The sessions build up from 10-minute lessons daily, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible for each individual cohort. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

Children make a strong start to their phonics teaching 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.

Any children who show gaps in learning or who may need additional practice will be provided with daily keep-up support sessions.

### **Phonics teaching in Year 1:**

In Year 1 we continue to teach 30minute phonics sessions daily. The sessions begin in Autumn term by reviewing Phase 3 and 4 GPCs moving quickly onto the teaching of Phase 5 GPCs. These sessions are taught in conjunction with the children's three Reading sessions per week. As with Reception class, any children who show gaps in learning or who may need additional practice will be provided with daily keep-up support sessions.

By the end of Year 1 children should be able to:

- respond speedily with the correct sound when shown any grapheme that has been taught
- for any given sound, write the common graphemes
- apply phonic knowledge and skill as the prime approach to reading and spelling, including unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable
- read other words of more than one syllable that contain the taught GPCs
- read automatically all of the high-frequency words, including common exception words, taught so far, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound and where these occur in the word
- accurately spell most of the high-frequency words, including common exception words, taught so far
- read words with contractions, and understand that the apostrophe represents the missing 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

### **Phonics teaching in Year 2 and beyond:**

In Year 2, pupils continue their reading journey through the *Little Wandle* programme, which builds on the secure phonics knowledge established in Key Stage 1. The programme provides a structured and consistent approach to teaching early reading, ensuring that children develop the skills required for both accuracy and fluency. Pupils engage with fully decodable texts matched to their phonic stage, enabling them to practise applying their knowledge in reading

with confidence and independence. Alongside decoding, the programme places emphasis on developing comprehension and prosody, supporting pupils to read with meaning and expression. Regular assessment and targeted support ensure that all children make sustained progress, with additional interventions provided promptly for those at risk of falling behind.

Additional phonics intervention sessions are taught daily for 20 minutes for any children who are not yet fully fluent at reading, or who have not passed the phonics screening check in Year 1. These children will be given as much support as required to ensure they catch up with their peers, and that the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Keep Up assessments to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge and teach to these at a steady pace using a specialist phonics teaching assistant dedicated to this role. Children will continue to learn spelling rules and patterns once they are reading fluently and have no gaps in their phonic knowledge.

By the end of Year 2 children should be able to:

- continue to apply phonic knowledge and skill as the prime approach to reading and spelling, until automatic decoding is embedded, reading is fluent and spelling is consistent
- read accurately by blending sounds in words that contain the graphemes taught so far, especially recognising alternative sounds for graphemes
- read accurately words of two or more syllables that contain the graphemes taught so far
- read and spell words containing common suffixes
- begin to apply knowledge of the spelling patterns taught when reading and spelling words
- read further high frequency words, including common exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound and where these occur in the word
- read most words quickly and accurately, without overt sounding and blending, when they have been frequently encountered
- read aloud books closely matched to their improving phonic knowledge, sounding out unfamiliar words accurately, automatically and without undue hesitation

- re-read these books to build up their fluency and confidence in word reading

For any children who still have gaps in their knowledge in Year 3 and beyond when reading or writing, we plan phonics 'catch-up' lessons to address specific reading and/or writing gaps. These short, sharp lessons last 10 minutes and must take place at least three times a week.

### **Daily Keep-up lessons:**

These sessions are designed to help ensure every child learns to read. Any child who needs additional practice has daily keep-up support, taught by either the class teacher, dedicated Phonics TA or the class TA. 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.

### **SEND**

The school implements the *Little Wandle SEND* programme to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are provided with a carefully adapted pathway to develop their early reading skills. This programme is designed to deliver the same systematic, synthetic phonics approach as the main *Little Wandle* scheme, but at a pace and level that meet individual learning needs. Lessons are highly structured, with additional repetition, multi-sensory support, and carefully chosen resources to promote engagement and success. Ongoing assessment and close collaboration with the school's SEND team enable teaching to be personalised, ensuring that all pupils, regardless of starting point, are given the opportunity to secure the foundations of reading and make meaningful progress towards becoming confident, independent readers.

### **Ensuring consistency and pace of progress:**

Every member of staff, including senior leadership and all teaching assistants, have been trained to teach phonics and early reading. All staff have the same expectations of progress and a consistent approach to teaching. 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 out each element of new learning for each day, week and term for the duration of the phonic programme.

All members of staff have access to lesson templates, prompt cards and how to videos to ensure teaching is a consistent approach and follows a consistent structure for every session. GPCs are taught in a specific order following the programme progression document, all staff are trained in the order of these and follow this. Children's decodable reading books are linked to this sequential order of teaching GPCs and are matched directly from assessments.

### **Monitoring:**

The Phonics and Early Reading Leader and the Senior Leadership Team 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 their gaps in learning.



## Impact

Our phonics curriculum has ambition for the high achievement of all pupils irrespective of background and starting point. The teaching and learning process is cyclical, therefore assessments are used to inform teaching, but also to measure progress.

### Assessment:

Assessment is used, by both the class teachers and the Phonics and Early Reading Lead, 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 on a Friday 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 address, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the keep-up support that they need.
  - By SLT and the Phonics lead, 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 plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

These strategies support an accurate assessment of pupils' knowledge and skills, enabling staff to ascertain how learning has been embedded in long term memory and also gaps in learning.

### Statutory Assessment:

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any children who do not pass the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Outcomes in statutory National Phonic Screening Test are a useful indicator of pupils' learning and one which supports staff in measuring the impact of the school's phonics curriculum. However, at St. Joseph's, we continually measure the impact of our phonics curriculum by scrutinising pupils' books, speaking to pupils about their learning and the use of internal 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

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Head teacher has the responsibility for the leadership of the phonics curriculum and delegates responsibility to key staff:

- The Deputy Head teacher co-ordinates the work of the subject leaders and ensures that the phonics curriculum has progression and appropriate coverage;
- The Phonics and Early Reading leader is responsible for the medium term plans and liaising with class teachers over the content and delivery of phases. They evaluate and monitor standards in their subject;
- Class teachers ensure that phonics is taught and that the aims are achieved for their class. They plan collaboratively to ensure parity across the year group;
- The Head teacher and Deputy Head teacher ensure that the progress of each pupil is tracked and that there is appropriate challenge support and intervention;
- Governors monitor the success of the phonics curriculum at whole Governing Body meetings through the Head teacher's report and reports from subject leaders.

**Reviewed:** September 2025

**Review Date:** September 2027