



# Phonics Policy

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Holly Primary School  
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## 1. Aims and Objectives

### General Statement

Phonics is one of the many skills needed to become a reader and writer. We aim to give children the best possible start on their reading/writing journey by teaching them the essential phonological/phonemic skills and knowledge to decode and encode (spell) words independently from the outset. At the point of reading/writing, children will use phonics as their first strategy to read and spell unknown words until it is embedded and automatic for them. We recognise that the development of spoken language and the enjoyment and comprehension of quality literature go hand in hand to develop a lifelong love of reading and aim to nurture and develop these attributes alongside the Little Wandle revised letters and sounds phonics programme.

Our policy sets out the means by which we ensure consistency and a systematic approach to the teaching and learning of synthetic phonics, as the prime method by which children learn to read and spell independently, automatically and confidently in the first years of their schooling. It aims to reinforce our high expectations for pupil progress. We follow the accredited phonics scheme Little Wandle revised letters and sounds, which was developed from the 2014 letters and sounds guidance. Every member of staff in school has completed the full training programme, regardless of year group taught. This means that they are all able to refer the children back to prior knowledge or complete a placement assessment if a new pupil joins our school or if there are concerns regarding retention. This whole school investment ensures consistency.

### Specific Aims

#### *Children should:*

- Learn the skills of blending and segmenting as a first priority as they are introduced to the grapheme/phoneme correspondences for reading and spelling. This ensures that from the outset children are able to read and spell simple CVCs with the GPCs they know.
- Be reading with increasing automaticity by the age of 6.
- Apply their phonic knowledge in the context of reading and spelling in the wider curriculum and understand how and when to do this.
- Develop their spoken language and comprehension simultaneously as they are learning phonics in the first years of school.
- Use phonics as their first strategy to decode and encode unknown words until a degree of fluency is reached.

## **2. Teaching Methods**

A prescribed daily Little Wandle phonics session is taught throughout F2 and Year 1 and into Year 2 until children are secure in Phase 5. The correctly matched resources are used each day in a structured, systematic way. Progress is monitored during each session and by half termly assessments and if a child falls behind they are rapidly given a daily one to one keeping up session with a fully trained member of staff.

Phonics sessions are structured in the same way each day and build in strong, consistent and familiar routines. Each lesson involves the revision and reading of phonemes, tricky words, decodable words linked to the phonemes taught, sentence and word building and spelling. This is a multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning that allows the children to learn from simultaneous visual, audio and kinaesthetic activities designed to secure essential phonic knowledge and skills.

### **Marking (spelling)**

Staff need to ensure that invented spellings, e.g. *hoam* for *home*, are corrected sensitively and selectively so that a balance is achieved between acceptance of the child's application of current knowledge of phonics and ensuring that invented spellings do not become ingrained. Selection of spellings to correct will be based upon what the child has been taught, ie, if the grapheme has been taught, the spelling will be corrected if the child continues to spell incorrectly. This also applies to tricky words, as appropriate to their year group.

### **Learning Environment**

Resources in the classroom support the children in applying phonics to reading and writing. In each classroom throughout F2 and Key Stage 1 (and KS2 if appropriate) there are the correct Little Wandle grapheme/phoneme displays, tricky word displays and word mats to support children to be independent in their spelling whilst at the same time reinforcing the link between discreet phonics teaching and learning and its purpose in reading and writing.

### **Grouping:**

The Little Wandle approach to letters and sounds is that the children are taught as a whole class. That said, where possible we split a larger class into two smaller groups with parallel teaching so that it is easier to assess individuals and monitor the need for keeping up sessions. Those who struggle to keep up with the majority have targeted one to one, or small group keeping up sessions, as modelled on the Little Wandle training videos. Children in year 2 or above who are not applying the phonemes they know or who don't know all of their phonemes are individually assessed using the placement assessment tool from the Little Wandle programme. They are then given a regular, bespoke one to one session to plug the gaps and allow them to close the gap.

### **Phonetically Decodable Texts:**

Children should not be reading texts which they cannot decode for themselves until they are reaching fluency. We use the Little Wandle Big Cat Phonics alongside the phonics teaching so that the children are reading exactly the right text for their decoding ability. The children should be approximately 90% fluent in their reading to allow for challenge without being disheartened.

### **3. Curriculum**

We use the programme Little Wandle Letters and Sounds revised to ensure a consistent system is followed, and that learning can be tracked and monitored within the systematic framework.

**Blending and segmenting.** Oral blending and segmenting are taught and then applied to reading and writing. Using the grapheme cards provided and used each day, the children are taught that phonemes are blended in order from left to right. They are also taught how words are segmented into phonemes for spelling. These skills are taught throughout each lesson and each phase of Letters and Sounds revised so that as children meet more complex words or grapheme phoneme correspondences they are able to tackle them with confidence.

#### **Common Exception Words**

As part of the daily phonics lessons the children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules. We call these 'tricky' words. Children are specifically taught the 'tricky' part of the word and strategies to remember this. They are taught to apply their knowledge of these words in reading and writing. The words are taken from phases 2 to 5 of Letters and Sounds revised.

#### **Comprehension and reading for meaning**

Comprehension, meaning and prosody are taught alongside the phonics programme. Reading and phonics work is very closely linked using the Little Wandle revised letters and sounds programme and the clearly matched Big Cat Phonics books. ( See the reading policy for more information.)

### **4. Assessment and tracking.**

#### **Foundation stage and Key Stage One**

Children in F1 are working towards becoming secure in Phase 1 of letters and sounds, showing phonological awareness and some ability to orally blend and segment. If appropriate, the children will start to become familiar with some grapheme-phoneme correspondences through a playful and multisensory approach using songs, actions and stories whilst they continue to learn to sequence, blend and segment sounds orally. To this end, children borrow books from the nursery 'library' to share and enjoy at home with their parents.

In F2 and Year one, the children begin the clearly structured Little Wandle letters and sounds revised programme. The programme ensures the children are closely observed and monitored on a daily basis as part of the approach. This means that those falling behind are given prompt keeping up sessions to close gaps immediately. On a half termly basis the children have an assessment week which allows closer analysis of short comings. The assessment and tracking are therefore integral to the structure of the programme.

Towards the end of Year One, children complete the Year One Phonics Screening Check, the results of which are a summative assessment of each child's ability to read/decode. Prior to that the

children will undertake mock screenings to get them used to the structure of the check and to identify any specific needs for intervention or booster sessions. This also applies to any children in Year 2 who did not meet the required standard in Year 1. The Little Wandle programme also exposes them to made up words.

If children move into Key Stage 2 below age related expectation in word reading and spelling, they are assessed using the Little Wandle placement assessment and given keeping up sessions alongside precision reading sessions that also follow the Little Wandle framework.

## **Key Stage 2**

Where children are meeting age related expectations when entering Key Stage 2, the main focus of their learning is spelling. We use the Twinkl spelling programme as a basis for our spelling teaching when children are secure in their use of phonics (end of phase 5). Phonic knowledge continues to underpin spelling with the developing of increasing understanding of the role of morphology and etymology.

Children's spelling is assessed and tracked within the writing assessment framework. If children do not meet their age related expectations in English, they will be identified through regular assessments. If decoding or spelling are identified as barriers to learning for any children, year group teachers will ensure that their planning includes provision for these children in the form of support or intervention as necessary. The English Lead oversees spelling for the school and further information can be found in the English policy document.

Children who have not met expectations in their phonics screening by the end of Key Stage One continue to be monitored and provision is made for them to be able to access Little Wandle keeping up sessions and guided reading groups.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The English Lead will oversee teacher's assessments of all pupils and ensure that children receive intervention in the form of keeping up sessions where appropriate and needed. Monitoring is carried out using assessment evidence to generate data which provides a picture of what the needs for intervention and support or acceleration are, and the impact of teaching and learning. Any children causing concern will be discussed with the Special Needs co-ordinator and suitable action plans will be put in place.

## **5. Parental Involvement**

At new starter meetings, parents will be made aware of the school phonics policy. Written information is given to new parents and copies are uploaded onto the school website. (see the reading and phonics parent's guide on website.)

We also share the links to the relevant Little Wandle pages and information, including pronunciation guidance.

F1 parent's meetings will include some information on the importance of children developing their phonological awareness, including sharing books, playing games and singing nursery rhymes together. As children begin their formal Little Wandle phonics programme in F2, parents are invited to a meeting to discuss how their children will learn to read and how they are able to support them at home. Home learning activities related to phonics, reading and writing will also be explained and exemplified.

Parents are invited to phonics sessions or workshops in school during the year to see teaching and learning strategies in practice. Progress in reading and spelling development will be discussed at the usual parent's evenings, or by appointment where necessary with individual parents.

Parents of children due to sit or re-sit the Phonics Screening Check will have information about this and final results of the screening check are reported formally to parents with the child's end of year report.