

Early Reading and Phonics Policy 2026-2027

Intent

‘We learn to read in Key Stage One so we can read to learn in Key Stage Two’
Janet Thompson, Phonics leadership network, May 2021

At Southglade Primary School we highly value reading as a golden thread which weaves through all areas of the curriculum. It is our intention that all our children will become successful readers by the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1), thus enabling them to have full access to our broad and inspiring Key Stage 2 (KS2) Curriculum. We believe this can be achieved by providing a structured and rigorous phonics programme, which begins in Nursery and continues through to Year 1, then develops in to spelling provision in Year 2 and into KS2.

At Southglade Primary School we have fidelity to the phonics programme
‘Little Wandle: Revised Letters and Sounds.’

This whole class phonics programme follows our ethos of ‘Keep up, not catch up’ which includes daily phonics sessions and three times weekly reading sessions. During these sessions children are taught decoding, prosody and comprehension in a structured and developed sequence of lessons linked to a decodable text which has been selected based on half termly assessments and their phonological understanding. This ensures they read fluently and with understanding allowing them to become expert decoders. Children take home their fully decodable reading book for their assessed level following the three in school reads (Big Cat: Little Wandle in EYFS and Year 1 and 2, 7+ phonetically decodable Big Cat Books in KS2).

Any child at risk of falling behind with their phonics understanding and reading provision will be identified within three weeks of starting phonics in Reception, and within the first week of Year 1. Keep up sessions will be delivered daily (for 5-10 minutes) to ensure children close the gaps in their understanding, which is bespoke to the child or group of children. Assessments will be used half-termly to identify gaps in children’s understanding to be addressed within these sessions and in whole class lessons.

For children in KS2 who have not passed the phonics screening check, they will complete Little Wandle: Rapid Catch Up before moving on to other supportive strategies. Provision may include NHS SALT, completing a dyslexia screening, daily Nessy or precision teaching. For children who still need to read decodable texts to support with fluency, which may be due to a range of factors, will use 7+ Little Wandle Big Cat decodable texts to support with reading.

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 and vocabulary development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects. Our oracy policy outlines other ways we support with speaking and listening at Southglade.

Leaders monitor the provision of reading through learning walks, observations in English, Curriculum and Phonics sessions; the learning environment and regular book looks; hearing individual children read, pupil voice, outcomes of PSC, half termly assessments, NFER termly reading assessments, reading data, decodable reading levels and where appropriate, book band data.

Implementation

Planning for every year group is provided by 'Little Wandle: revised Letters and Sounds', and is used to teach phoneme and grapheme knowledge. The programme teaches children all 44 graphemes and how to use them to blend to read and segment to write efficiently.

Nursery

Children begin by looking at simple sound knowledge and when ready work on 'Foundations for Phonics' provided by 'Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds Revised'. This supports initial language acquisition through stories, rhymes and understanding in preparation for 'Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds Revised' Phase 2 teaching in Reception. 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.

Reception

We follow the 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised' expectations of progress. We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins straight away in the Autumn term. 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. They also complete three weekly group reads of a decodable text from Autumn 2 term onwards.

Year 1

Children begin 'Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds Revised' in Year 1 as soon as they return to school after the Summer holidays. The first three weeks is a recap of Phase 3 and Phase 4 in preparation for teaching Phase 5. They allow staff to identify if there are any gaps in children's understanding to begin keep up sessions within three weeks of October half term. 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.

Additional Support (SEN pupils)

Pupils who have additional needs requiring specific phonics support will access the SEN resources and planning provided by 'Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds Revised'. This will be delivered 1:1 or in a small group with pupils of the same identified level. Pupils who are working on the B Square curriculum will have phonics provision to support with their level of development and activities to support closing their phonics understanding based on their identified targets.

Year 2 (Bridge to Spelling)

Pupils who have passed the phonics screening check will attend the Bridge to Spelling sessions provided by 'Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised.' Autumn 1 is a recap of Phase 5 sounds from Year 1, Summer 2, with spelling rules beginning in Autumn 2. Pupils who have not passed the phonics screening check, but are working at a Reception level will attend Rapid Catch up sessions at this time. Pupils who have not passed the phonics screening check but have more secure sound knowledge will have additional keep up sessions to close the gaps, allowing them exposure to spellings in Year 2.

We are building a skilled team who can teach phonics well:
By accessing online training and providing inhouse CPD, team teaching, fortnightly coaching and practice sessions in phase meetings, learning walks and paired observations, we ensure that all staff delivering phonics are trained and confident to deliver it accurately and consistently to all children. All staff understand the need for an agreed structure and way of teaching phonics, which provides continuity throughout the school. They are familiar with specific phonics terminology for 'Little Wandle: revised Letters and Sounds'. The six hour training forms part of our student, ECT and new staff induction plan.

Daily Keep-up sessions ensure every child learns to read
Any child who needs additional practice has daily keep-up support, a planned session from the programme, taught by a fully trained adult. This might be individual or in a small group session. Keep-up sessions 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. This is primarily for pupils in Reception & Year 1.

Rapid Catch-up programme
If any child in Year 2 still requires phonics support having not passed the phonics screening or in Year 3 onwards having not passed the recheck in Year 2, they are taught the 'rapid catch up' programme from a trained adult. These short, sharp lessons last 10-20 minutes and take place daily. It follows the programme structure, with planning and resources provided and includes 3x weekly reading sessions following the same structure as in Reception and Year One. Where required we may teach Rapid Catch Up in Years 4, 5 or 6 or for new pupils to the school or those who have made further progress but still require additional phonics support.

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.
- 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 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. All children are baselined as soon as they enter Year One by completing a phonics screening check. Children then take a practice phonics screening test four times throughout the year; scores are monitored and children who need further support receive it through 1:1 reading sessions and attending the Year 1 phonics sessions.

Half-termly summative phonics assessments are used to inform the support given to children during additional 1:1 keep up or catch up sessions and group reading sessions. Daily assessment for learning is used to identify children within a session who need immediate support to ensure they do not fall behind. Children who do not pass the phonics screening are given additional support in Year 2 by attending an additional phonics session each day (rapid catch up) and reading decodable texts 1:1 or in a small group which match the sounds they know until all gaps have been closed.

Decodable Reading Books

Decodable reading books in EYFS and Year 1 match our phonics programme (and where required for anyone accessing the Rapid Catch up programme or any child who still requires a decodable text from Year 4-6 read the 7+ decodable books). Children are taught specific phonemes / graphemes and have access to decodable reading books that reinforce the phonics sounds that have been explicitly taught. Half-termly assessments are used to identify which reading books match children's phonological understanding. No child is given a book including graphemes they have not seen. Children are expected to read the book with 90% accuracy/fluency initially to ensure they are accessing the correct reading book. These books are sent home weekly and changed weekly based on the phonics set.

Children read their decodable reading book three times weekly in school (before sending this home) focusing on:
Lesson 1 – Decoding (90% accuracy)
Lesson 2 – Prosody (95% accuracy)
Lesson 3 – Comprehension

We encourage parents to hear their child read at home regularly to develop fluency. Our expectation is that children read at home 3 times per week minimum. Reading diaries are used by parents and staff to log when a child reads. The teacher and TA monitor these in order to ensure children are reading at home and also to gain information about other books that children may have accessed to at home.

Reading Comprehension and Responding to Texts:

Starting in EYFS, and continuing throughout school, children are explicitly taught to comprehend and respond to texts.
We teach the following key reading skills, outlined in the National Curriculum and EYFS:

- Using background knowledge to understand text
- Predicting
- Understanding vocabulary and developing strategies for this including recognising what they don't understand
- Asking questions and "wondering" about the text
- Visualising
- Developing inference
- Summarising
- Oracy skills of retell, communication and language/vocabulary development

We use a range of teaching strategies across school to ensure that we meet the needs of all our pupils as follows:

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

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 using 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 in Autumn 2 from beginning the programme. 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. These pupils use wordless books so they can get used to the structure of a reading session.

Children hear, share and discuss a range of high-quality texts including fiction, poetry and non-fiction. We have a book-based curriculum with carefully chosen key and supporting texts, covering a range of genres, styles and themes. The level of challenge increases across year groups, through the complexity of texts being read. Key vocabulary links to each book and topic. Throughout the school all pupils are heard read 1:1 throughout the week with pupils requiring additional reading support heard reading 1:1 3 times a week in addition to the group read.

Reading in Year 1 – Year 6 is built into our English sessions, a minimum of 20 minutes daily reading (additional to spellings) which supports with differentiated comprehension skills and explores a range of fluency techniques through guided, shared and individual reading as well as a range of activities. In Year 1 we include the three weekly reads as part of the teaching of reading with two additional activities in English.

However, comprehension is not only taught in these specific sessions but is at the heart of topic and cross-curricular teaching. At Southglade we recognise that good reading comprehension relies heavily on knowledge. Our English planning structure in Years 1 – 6 and our broad and enriched curriculum is structured to aid reading comprehension skills by ensuring that children gain knowledge of the world in which they live and can make links to their reading and learning. We look for any opportunity for reading to be the focus of our learning and ensure a range of quality texts are used to support this.

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 consistent language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.

The weekly content grid maps out 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 phonics lead, reading lead and SLT when carrying out monitoring use the Prompt cards and structure of the lessons to monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

All staff complete the annual phonics refresher training at INSET day in September and any new staff including ECT's, students and apprentices are trained on the full 6 hour training programme from their two weeks of beginning at school.

In addition we expect our children to:

Have a love of reading that feeds the imagination;
Read widely across both fiction and non-fiction, developing knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live;
Have a developed vocabulary beyond that used in everyday speech;
Understand nuances in vocabulary choice;
Understand and use age-appropriate, academic vocabulary.

Impact

EYFS

'Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds Revised' EYFS supports with pupils achieving the EYFS Reading ELG. We would expect pupils who have been exposed to the programme and had additional Keep Up where required to achieve the reading ELG. The two areas are focused on comprehension, which is supported by the book based curriruclum and 3x a week reading which includes the final read focused on comprehension and Word Reading where they have to use phonics knowledge to blend sounds and read a range of simple words using their sound knowledge.

KS1

By the end of Year 2 we expect our children to be skilled at word reading to ensure:
speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding); including decoding most new words outside their spoken vocabulary and making a good approximation to the word's pronunciation; the speedy recognition of familiar printed words, using reading books at an age appropriate interest level, accurately and at a reasonable speaking pace; books at an age appropriate interest level read at a speed that is sufficient for children to focus on understanding what they read rather than on decoding individual words; most words are read effortlessly and children are able to work out how to pronounce unfamiliar written words with increasing automaticity.
A minimum of 80% of Year 1 children will pass the phonics screening check and a minimum of 90% combined will have passed by the end of Year 2.

Key Stage 2

Decoding fluently and accurately by the end of Year 2 means that no further direct teaching of word reading skills (with the exception of vocabulary development) should be needed for the majority of children in KS2.
For children with special or additional needs who are working well below Age Related levels we provide bespoke phonics support and specific interventions. These may be delivered by a teacher, TA or SNA according to need, and are planned after consultation with the SEND/phonics lead.
Other strategies will have been used in conjunction with phonics to ensure children are being offered the best provision they can be to close gaps

By the end of LKS2 we expect our children to:

Have decoding skills that are secure and hence vocabulary is developing;
Be independent, fluent and enthusiastic readers who read widely and frequently;
Be developing their understanding and enjoyment of stories, poetry, plays and non-fiction, and learning to read silently;
Be developing their knowledge and skills in reading non-fiction about a wide range of subjects;
Be able to justify their views independently about what they have read.

By the end of Year 6 we expect our children to:

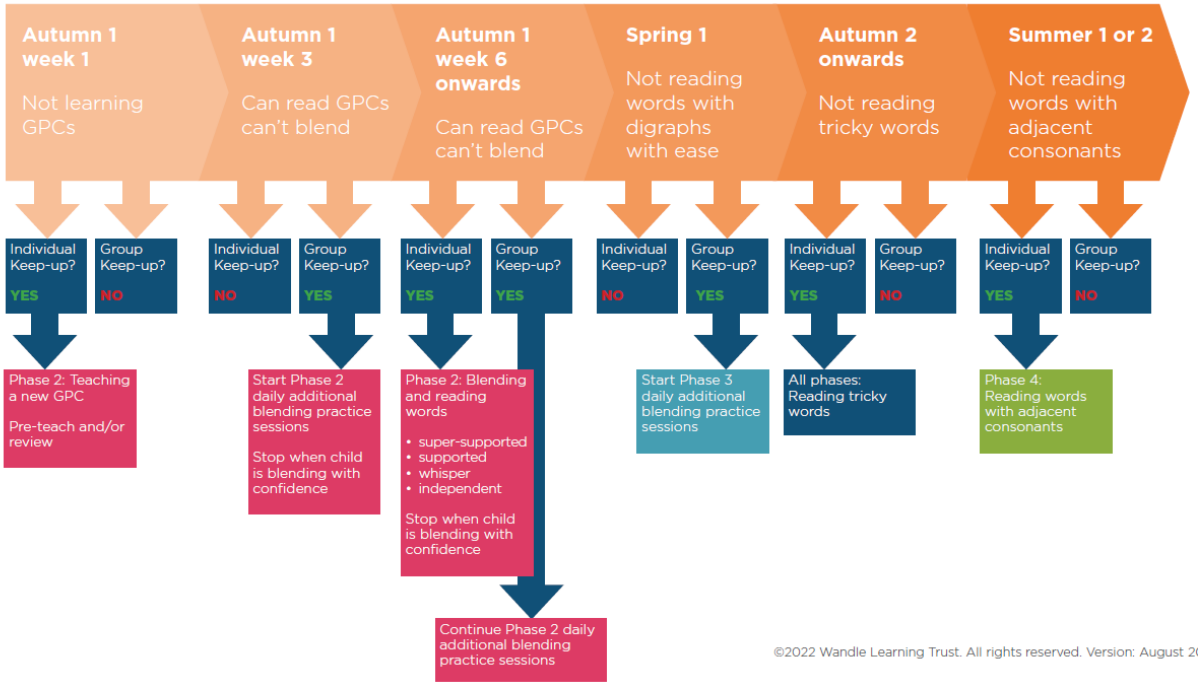
Read sufficiently fluently and effortlessly, with understanding at an age appropriate interest level in readiness for secondary school;

All staff across school will have the knowledge of phonics required to allow texts to be accessible to all children, to have resources and strategies to support all readers. Spelling accuracy will have improved across school and this will have impacted their writing.

Reception: Identifying children for group or individual Keep-up support

Use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments (every six weeks), as well as assessment within the daily lesson to identify children in Reception who need either individual or group Keep-up sessions. Do not let children fall behind – take action as soon as possible.

Use the assessment again after three weeks to check that these children have filled their gaps.



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Year 1: Identifying children for group or individual Keep-up support

Use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments (every six weeks), as well as assessment within the daily lesson, to identify children in Year 1 who need either individual or group Keep-up sessions. Do not let children fall behind – take action as soon as possible.

Use the assessment again after three weeks to check that these children have filled their gaps.

