St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

We grow and learn in the footsteps of Jesus

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The context of our school

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At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we believe that reading is fundamental to education. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils' success. Through these, they develop communication skills for education and for working with others: in school, in training and at work. Pupils who find it difficult to learn to read are likely to struggle across the curriculum, since English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching. We ensure that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At St Mary's, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Nursery - Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Nursery Foundations of Phonics ('Foundations for Phonics', 'Foundations for the love of Reading' and 'Foundation for the love of Language' and then Reception 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.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At St Mary's, 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 Mary's, 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 readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

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

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Nursery

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.

We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception by following the Little Wandle Foundations. There are 3 elements to this:

- Foundations for Phonics – Rhyme Time (all year) and Tuning into Sounds (from Autumn 2)
- Foundations for a love of Reading
- Foundations for a love of Language

Little Wandle Foundations is aligned to the non-statutory guidance on Development Matters, as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. We use it as part of our wider provision for Communication and Language, and Literacy. It supports children to:

- develop their phonological awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllables, initial and voice sounds, and oral blending
- love stories and rhymes, and learn by heart a bank of familiar favourites
- increase their vocabulary and confidence to talk
- improve their listening and ability to take part in back-and-forth conversations.

We believe that the priority in Nursery should be to build the foundations for phonics for all children. Research tells us that disadvantaged children start Nursery behind their more fortunate peers. By leaving formal phonics teaching to Reception, Foundations allows us to devote more time to working with children who need extra help to develop the skills and behaviours that underpin successful reading.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. 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 as soon as the children enter Reception
- 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.
- Tricky words are set out strategically throughout the Reception and Year 1 Little Wandle programme.

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 daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above 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 Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- These short, sharp lessons last 10 minutes and take place at least three times a week and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

- Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed. Corresponding summative assessments are carried out to ensure this content is secure.
- Once all Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.
- We use the Phase 5 review assessment before teaching in Year 2 to identify any children who may need more support when teaching. We reassess after teaching the Phase 5 review.
- Once the Phase 5 review is secure, we teach the Bridge to spelling before moving to the Spelling units.
- Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers have daily phonics teaching and follow the Rapid Catch-up programme.

Children in Year 2 to Year 6: Rapid Catch-up

- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above who is not at age-related expectations for 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.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15 to 20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.
- We assess children who are new to our school, new to the country or new to English using the Rapid Catch-up assessments to quickly identify their needs.
- We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge and teach these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- We assess children every four weeks using the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching.

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
    - 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.
    - In Reception, from Week 4 onwards children access books with words matched to their secure phonic knowledge from assessments.
- 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: teaching children to use phonic knowledge to read words
    - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
    - comprehension: using dialogic talk to help children to understand the text.

- Children read each book three times to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension as well as book behaviours.
- In Reception, in weeks 1-3, we use the Little Wandle books with no words, as children don't yet have the GPC knowledge to access books with words. The children still follow the reading practice session focus as above.
- In Week 4 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.
- In Year 2, we ensure children complete reading the core programme decodable books (up to Phase 5 Set 5). To exit the programme, we complete the final fluency assessment to ensure children can read with adequate speed and accuracy: approximately 60 words per minute with 90%+ accuracy.
- Reading in Rapid Catch-up lessons mirrors the core programme. Children following the Rapid Catch-up programme are taught to read using the 7+ fully decodable books. These follow the same progression as the core programme but are more appropriate for older readers.

Teaching reading: Fluency programme

- We teach reading to children in Year 2 and above who have exited the core programme using Little Wandle Fluency.
- Each Fluency reading lesson is 25 to 30 minutes. The structure of every lesson is the same:
    - A pre-read to practise reading words and to support vocabulary
    - Children read aloud for ten minutes and the teacher 'taps in' to hear every child read
    - Focused teaching of prosody, repeated reading and comprehension through discussion.
- We assess reading speed and accuracy every 12 weeks and use these assessments to monitor progress and allocate books.

- We also use Assessment for Learning (AfL) and our professional judgement to assess each child's progress in reading, so we can ensure that they have the right books to meet their needs.
- We review children's prosody by using the Prosody grid. This gives us a picture of how well the child is reading aloud.
- Comprehension is taught through dialogic talk and teachers use their AfL to quickly address misconceptions and develop children's curiosity and engagement with each book.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
- Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the Everybody read! resources.
- 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 on a more frequent basis.
- We prioritise children who may not have reading support at home or who may not have access to books. We ensure that they have individual reading times with volunteers and staff to share quality children's literature to promote a love of reading.

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 aloud 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. Mary's and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has a show case of books 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, children have access to the reading area every day in their exploring time and the books are continually refreshed to reflect current topics and interests
- Books and reading materials are added to other areas of continuous provision in EYFS to enhance those areas, spark children's interests and reinforce that reading is for all topics and all areas of learning – helping us to learn more, know more and remember more.
- Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school. In Reception and Year 1, school adults will record reading sessions so parents know what the focus that day has been. In Year 2 and beyond, there is no expectation that staff write in reading records. In Nursery, communication with home about phonics and reading is through the online learning journal 'Tapestry'.
- As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read.
- Each class visits the local library over the course of the year.
- The school library is available for classes to access.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (mystery reader, author visits and workshops including 'authorfy', national events e.g. National Poetry Day, World Book Day etc).
- We use the Everybody read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

Impact

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
    - to plan repeated practice throughout the day to ensure all children secure learning
    - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessments** are carried out half termly and uploaded onto the Assessment tracker for Reception and Year 1. These are used:

- to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups
- by teachers, Reading Leaders and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level
- by SLT to scrutinise and plan how to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers.

We assess:

- every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be reviewed or retaught
- to establish if learning is secure for more than 70% of children before new content is taught
- to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Daily Keep-up support that they need.

Every three weeks, we reassess every child who is not on track.

- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
  - in Year 1 and 2, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Years 2 to 6, when they are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme.
  - for children in Year 2 and above who are taught Little Wandle Fluency. These assessments identify the best Fluency book level for each child. We assess the children every term (every 12 weeks or so).

  *Year 2 children can exit the Rapid-Catch-up programme when they can read the final fluency assessment at 60-70+ words per minute. Older children can exit the Rapid Catch-up programme when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at age-related expectations. After exiting their programme, children do not need to read any more fully decodable books.

- A **placement assessment** is used:
  - with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

- The **Rapid Catch-up assessment** is used
  - with any child new to the school in Year 2 and above to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and 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.

Ongoing assessment for Rapid Catch-up in Years 2 to 6

- Children in Year 2 to 6 are assessed through:
    - the Rapid Catch-up initial assessment to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan appropriate teaching
    - the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching
    - the Rapid Catch-up fluency assessments when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books for age 7+.