



## St Chad's CofE Nursery and Infant School

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# Phonics Policy

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**Policy Approved**

**Signed: J. Coupland**

**Date: 10.05.23**

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## Statement of intent

At St Chad's, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we are proud to use *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*; a systematic and synthetic phonics programme.

The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. Put simply, we want children to learn to read effortlessly so they can put all of their energy into comprehending what they have read and to spell effortlessly so that they can put all of their energy into composing what they write.

Early reading starts with phonics and developing good phonics skills in younger children is vitally important. The foundations for early phonics are laid from Nursery. This largely falls within the 'Communication and Language' and 'Literacy' area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The aim of this phase is to foster children's listening and speaking skills as preparation for learning to read with phonics. Children are provided with a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences which 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

## Aims

We aim for every person to follow our school ethos and LOVE promise:

**LOVE** God **LOVE** Neighbour **LOVE** Self (*Matthew 22:36*)

As a Church of England school, our school vision takes inspiration from and is deeply rooted in the Greatest Commandment:

*"Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself".*

Our school's core values of **love, friendship, compassion and respect** sit at the heart of our school community and underpin every aspect of school life, including our whole school policy for promoting positive behaviour.

**Love:** "Do everything with love". (*Corinthians 16:14*)

**Friendship:** "Encourage one another and build each other up". (*Thessalonians 5:11*)

**Compassion:** "Be kind to one another". (*Ephesians 4:32*)

**Respect:** "Treat others as you want to be treated". (*Luke 6:31*)

We aim to develop happy, confident, loving and caring children who look after and value themselves, each other and their world. We want every child to feel valued and special and flourish with their unique God-given talents in all that they choose to do.

We seek to be positive role models to our children, guiding and teaching them through our 'LOVE Promise'. We:

**L**ook after our school and each other

**O**nly ever do our best

**V**alue everyone and remember our manners



Enjoy our learning!

### **The Context of our School.**

St Chad's is a smaller than average, multicultural inner-city infant school with a morning nursery attached. School places that we offer are: 26 part time FS1, 40 full time FS2 and 80 KS1 children. Our school serves a catchment area of high deprivation, in the bottom 4% most disadvantaged nationally. A significant percentage of our children come from disadvantaged backgrounds with over 90% living in the 20% most deprived areas nationally. The stability of our school population is less than the national average and mobility has increased considerably over the past three years. In 2021-22, the school had 24 pupils leave and 44 pupils arrive outside of the normal admission period. Of the 44 families that started outside of the normal admission window in 2021-22, only 2 were proficient in English. In 2021-22, 48% of Year 2 pupils had not been in school since the beginning of Reception (the previous year, this figure was similar at 49%). The percentage of Gypsy/Roma children has increased from less than 10% in 2017 to around 30% in 2022. However, this does not fully reflect our current demographics as many families do not assign themselves as belonging to this ethnic group. We believe that the actual number is around 40%. This a significant factor as school is welcoming an increasing number of children newly arrived to the UK, particularly of Gypsy/ Roma heritage with little or no English or prior schooling – often outside of the normal admissions window. The percentage of children with English not as their first language is more than four times the national average.

Children enter the Foundation Stage well below average, on average 18 months to two years behind chronological ages. In 2021-22, only 17% of children began at the expected standard (this equated to 5 children). Over 60% were working at 22 months or below in their prime areas of learning.

The percentage of children eligible for pupil premium has increased considerably over the past few years. Although in 2021-22 it was more than double the national average, this is still not fully reflective of deprivation within the school's community, as many newly arrived families, although living in poverty, are not entitled to benefits and therefore are not necessarily eligible for free school meals.

Over the past three years the number of children with SEND has remained over the national average. The majority of our SEND children have speech and language and/or cognitive needs. We are also seeing an increasing number of New Arrival children starting school through normal school admissions with significant needs not yet identified, including in Key Stage 1.

We are proud of the diverse community in which we serve. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

### **Intent.**

#### **Phonics (reading and spelling).**

At St Chad's Nursery and Infant School, 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/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.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At St Chad's Nursery and Infant 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. 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. We have a Phonics Co-Ordinator in school who



drives the phonics programme in our school. This person is a highly skilled phonics practitioner who ensures we have fidelity to *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

### **Comprehension.**

At St Chad's Nursery and Infant School, 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 Co-Ordinator who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching reading, and they monitor and support our staff, 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.

#### **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 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.
  - Children in Year 1 review Phases 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 daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 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 15-20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

#### **Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions four times a week**

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions four 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 we aim to start these sessions 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 Years 2, 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 taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. We expect that one video per week is uploading onto Class Dojo, of children reading their decodable book.
  - 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 daily.

### **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 Co-Ordinator, Phonics Co-Ordinator 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 using a variety of books, including our reading spine and poetry. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at St Chad's Nursery and Infant 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, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Nursery/ Reception take home a school library book weekly.
- Reception children are encouraged to sign up for a library card in the September they start school. Our Family Support Worker then takes a group of parents' half-termly to the local library, with their child.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (author visits and workshops, national events etc).

### 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
  - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessment** for [Reception](#) and [Year 1](#) 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 subject lead, and class teachers and are 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.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
  - in Year 1, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. For Year 1 children, this is when they 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.



### **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 Keep-Up, Catch-up in Years 1 and 2:**

- Children in KS1 are assessed through:
  - the assessment tracker to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan appropriate teaching
  - the Keep-Up, Catch-Up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching
- Children are assessed every three weeks, and this is updated on the assessment tracker to ensure they are making progress and in the correct group.