

# Phonics and Early Reading Policy



## The context of our school

We are a three-form entry infant school, located in Hampstead Garden Suburb in the London Borough of Barnet. We do not have our own nursery, and our pupils come to us from a very wide range of pre-school/nursery and home experiences, with varied self-help skills, motor skills, language skills and cultural capital. In recent months pupil mobility has increased, and we have welcomed a significant number of children who are new to English and to the UK school system, including an increasing number of children who are refugees. 22% of our children are entitled to Pupil Premium funding and 80% of our children speak a language other than English at home, with over 40 different languages spoken.

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 Garden Suburb 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 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 Garden Suburb 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 prioritise the development of each child's ability to communicate effectively and purposefully in English. We aim for our children to foster a love of reading, that will also feed into an enthusiasm for writing. We base our curriculum around good quality key texts, that reflect the diverse backgrounds of our children, and lead them to sources of knowledge and information as well as imaginative worlds beyond their own experience. We aim to create a rich and inspirational reading environment, giving our children opportunities to hear, share and engage with quality texts in a range of genres.



Children will be taught common exception words set out in the national curriculum and will be taught spelling patterns. In Year 2, children will have regular spelling quizzes based on spellings sent home for homework and will have opportunities to work on these spellings within class and after the quizzes.

### Comprehension

At Garden Suburb 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.

### Leadership

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Reading Leader who drives 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

### Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 20 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.
- We plug the gaps throughout the day for children missing any key knowledge.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 4 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 phonics lessons in Year 2

- Our aim is to finish the scheme, so for classes still needing to continue with their phonics, we teach phonics for 20 minutes a day, reviewing each lesson.
- Each Friday, we review each lesson and the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- We plug the gaps throughout the day for children missing any key knowledge.
- Phonic sessions are vital for even those children who are already fluent readers, as the sessions will support children with applying learned GPCs, supporting them with their spellings.
- We follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* expectations of progress:
  - Children 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 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 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 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 two or three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions two or 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.
- 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 Week 4 of their phonics teaching. 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, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.
- Once children in Year 2 are fluent readers and no longer need fully decodable books, we have guided reading sessions for groups focusing on key reading comprehension areas.

### 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 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, Year 1 and Year 2 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions will also read their reading practise book to an adult at additional times throughout the week. These "extra reads" give them a minimum of three reading sessions a week.

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

- Every teacher and teaching assistant 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 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 Garden Suburb 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 Reception and Year 1, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- In Year 2, children have access to the reading corner every day in the morning, during reading sessions and at additional intervals throughout the day.

- Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and the adults will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school.
- 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
  - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessment** for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 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 SLT 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.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
  - in Year 1 and Year 2, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Year 2, when they 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. Year 2 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, Year 1 and Year 2 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 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

- Children in Year 2 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+.
- The fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They also assess when children are ready to exit the Rapid Catch-up programme, which is when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute.

**Reviewed January 2023**