



The Federation of Spixworth Schools

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Agreed by Individual Governor: Summer 2024

To be reviewed: Summer 2026

Intent

Overall curriculum rationale

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies used for the development of the curriculum undertaken within The Federation of Spixworth Schools. This policy promotes best practice and establishes consistency in teaching and learning across the federation. It also takes into account the diversity of our learners, providing equality of opportunity for all, alongside varied learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of pupil attitude and achievement in phonics and early reading.

At The Federation of Spixworth Schools we will inspire every child through words. Through engagement in language rich classrooms we will open worlds of opportunity. High quality texts will develop enthusiastic writers where experimentation with words is supported alongside development of skills in the technicalities of writing. Our children will communicate in all its forms with a pleasure and passion that will open doors, across subjects, to the possibility of realising endless dreams and lifelong learning.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2024) The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- DfE (2013) National Curriculum in England: reading programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Curriculum
Curriculum Risk Assessment
Spoken Language
Reading
Writing, including handwriting and spelling.

Aims

At The Federation of Spixworth Schools, we believe that success in phonics is essential for all other learning. Developing from speaking and listening, strong phonic knowledge provides children with the ability to read well and so opens doors to success in every other subject. The aims of The Federation of Spixworth Schools phonics and early reading curriculum are to:

- Teach the full range of reading strategies including: phonic knowledge, grammatical knowledge, word recognition and contextual knowledge
- Teach children to understand the phonic system and use this to read accurately to build confidence
- Develop children's ability to monitor their reading and correct their mistakes
- Develop children's interest in words and their meanings, developing a varied and rich vocabulary
- Give children access to a range of genres in fiction and poetry

- Provide opportunities for children to use and be able to read a range of non-fiction texts
- Teach children to use ICT systems to locate information
- Develop children's powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness through reading a range of texts
- Enable children to express personal responses with increasing fluency by providing opportunities to discuss books with reference to author, illustrator, genre, theme and characters
- Model the reading process for children
- Enable children to take part regularly in reading activities
- Develop activities through which children develop their interest in books, and read with enjoyment
- Maintain partnership with parents through the child's reading progress.

Implementation

National Curriculum Content

Foundations for Phonics

- Building on nursery provision, 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.
- Children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

EYFS Educational Programme

Taken from the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage January 2024. Teaching and learning in phonics is planned in line with the Communication and Language and Literacy areas. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Reading and Spelling and Handwriting policies.

Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and

sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

EYFS Early Learning Goals

Literacy

Comprehension

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.
- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories.
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

Word Reading

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

In Reception, children follow the EYFS Curriculum and teaching and learning is planned for in line with the Communication and Language and Literacy areas. In Key Stage One and Key Stage Two children follow the Reading programmes of study of the National Curriculum for English. Skills in English are embedded throughout all areas of the Primary National Curriculum. We start teaching phonics in Reception and follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Progression (see the link in the appendix), which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. For the majority of children, the bulk of its key skills are embedded by

the age of 7 (Year 3). As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. 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.

Curriculum delivery

Delivery of the knowledge and skills required for reading begins from the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 through the Little Wandle Phonics approach. Here children are taught phoneme and grapheme recognition and the ability to blend sounds to form words. They begin to develop basic fluency and comprehension skills through answering questions and discussing texts. As children complete the phonics programme in Year 2, Accelerated Reader and the Book Talk approach are used to continue teaching and learning in reading throughout Key Stage 2.

Teaching and learning approaches

Our curriculum ensures that all children have plenty of opportunities to read for different purposes. We encourage reading through all curriculum areas and use quality reading texts. Children further build on their early skills to become confident and accomplished readers.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for up to 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 week (often on a Friday), we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers. Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins from Week 1 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 Phase 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 *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.

If any child in Year 3 to 6 has gaps in their phonic knowledge when reading or writing, we plan phonics 'catch-up' lessons, or follow the 'SEND programme, to address specific

reading/writing gaps. These short, sharp lessons last 10 minutes and take place at least three times a week.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions at least three times a week. These:

- Are taught by a fully trained adult
- 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. 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.

Home reading with decodable Books

The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. This book is changed once a week.

Reading for pleasure books (from the library) also go home for parents to share and read to children.

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.

Planning expectations

To ensure consistency and pace of progress, every teacher in our school has been trained to teach phonics and early 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. Class teachers use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Strategies used to support teaching and learning in Phonics lessons are those promoted in the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised SSP. Teachers may also use other simple classroom management strategies to ensure the lessons are delivered with good pace and rigour.

Strategies you would see in every Phonics lesson:

- *Segmenting Fingers* are used to help children segment and count the phonemes in a word. We do this with palm facing out, left to right from thumb (left hand – left to right).
- *Tap Tap sweep* is used to model the reading process. We point to each individual grapheme as it is said then drag finger underneath all of word as it is blended.
- *Sound Buttons* are used to support children with recognising the graphemes within a word. We use dots for individual letter graphemes and a line for digraphs and trigraphs.
- *Copy me* (hand to ear) is used to show expectations of children repeating.
- *Shuffle time* is used to maintain interest while word cards are re-shuffled ready to review in a different order.

Equipment and resources

- All EYFS and KS1 classrooms have visual prompts to support the teaching and learning of Phonics and Early Reading.
- Displays – Classrooms have a display which model our approach to teaching reading through the three main strands: decoding, prosody and comprehension.
- A 'Grapheme Chart' (Reception) or 'Grow The Code' is displayed in all classrooms in Reception- Year 6.
- Wall Friezes – In Reception, all graphemes are displayed with both lower-case and upper-case representations of the letters for the graphs.
- Phonics mats – Sound mats/grapheme charts/grow the code are available in every classroom. In Reception and Year 1 these include both the grapheme and mnemonic to promote independence.
- Font – All Phonics resources use printed font, not cursive or pre-cursive fonts.
- Little Wandle Word/Grapheme Cards – Reception and Year 1 classes have their own set of word cards and grapheme cards which are used in Phonics lessons. For catch up sessions in Year 2 and KS2, a separate resource box is used with all resources available.
- Due to the new research on cognitive overload, we do not use songs or actions to support the teaching and learning of Phonics.
- Children with special educational needs may require additional resources. These are to be discussed with the Phonics Lead and SENCo.
- Collins Big Cat decodable readers are used as part of The Little Wandle reading provision. These are organised in packs of at least 6 (according to the phase and set) for group reading and stored in the infant school library.

Health and safety

Specific considerations for this subject can be found in the Curriculum Risk Assessment, which is reviewed annually. A log is kept of all staff who have read and understood this assessment each year.

Cross curriculum links

Although taught as a discrete subject daily, we do not see phonics as a standalone subject. In school we recognise the impact good phonics teaching can have on children learning to read and write, but we see it as part of a rich literacy curriculum. Children are exposed to a wide variety of books and texts to encourage their love of reading. During literacy sessions we encourage children to apply their phonic knowledge to read and write. In Early Years children are given the opportunity to develop their mark making into early writing through setting exciting contexts for writing for a purpose using their phonic knowledge.

Inclusion and equality of opportunity

Children with additional needs will join in with whole class teaching and small adaptations may well be made Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised includes weekly lesson plans and planned assessment materials to help achieve a constant pace of learning and is designed for the teaching of all children in a mainstream setting. We do have additional resources available to support children who require additional support.

For those children who need support beyond the daily routine as a specialist provision, the SEND Programme has been developed to be used with the graduated approach to teach children to learn to read in small steps that provide the right amount of challenge. It provides pathways for pupils who may need very specific adaptations to the teaching steps because they have complex needs, and has been developed with the advice from Special schools across the country.

For those children in Year 2 and above who are not reading at the expected level for their age, we have access to the Rapid Catch-up programme which mirrors the main phonics programme but has been created to help children catch up quickly, so has a faster pace. By the end of the Rapid Catch-up programme, children should be reading with enough fluency and accuracy to access the curriculum in class, and to read with enjoyment and understanding.

Impact

Assessment and reporting

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 (half-term) to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan any catch-up support that may be needed.
- To narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.

The assessment tracker can:

- Quickly identify children at risk of falling behind
- Get accurate data about each child's learning gaps
- Drill down to plan exactly what GPCs and words you need to review
- Identify your lowest 20% so you can plan urgent and longer term support
- Accurately identify the right matched decodable book level for each child
- Create heatmaps and other reports and easily share progress with SLT and governors.

Statutory assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Reading to Learn

Once the children have mastered the essentials of Phonics (typically within Year 2), our focus shifts towards reading to learn. See the Reading policy.

Staff training

All staff have access to Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Training via the website. Guidance document available to all staff.

Monitoring and evaluation

The staff and Governors are committed to maintaining standards, establishing high expectations, and promoting effective teaching and learning. Procedures for monitoring evaluation involve all members of the school community as part of the monitoring cycle.

A commitment to Assessment for Learning (AfL) endorses the school's participation in the National Curriculum and demonstrates an ethos in which the personalities, strengths and needs of children are considered and addressed individually. The monitoring and evaluating of practice enables the progress of individuals to be seen within the class and whole-school contexts of school and staff development.

The main purpose of monitoring, evaluation and review is to ensure that all members of the school community perform their roles effectively in order to maintain high standards of learning and teaching and raise achievements for all.

Roles and responsibilities

The Role of the Governing Body and Executive Head teacher is to:

- Approve and monitor the content of this policy.

- Liaise with the Executive Head, Heads of Schools, subject leaders and teachers with regards to pupil progress and attainment.
- Nominate a Governor to have specific responsibility for Curriculum including oversight, support and challenge
- Ensure the curriculum is inclusive and accessible to all.

The Role of the Head of School and Curriculum Leader is to:

- Devise long and medium term plans for the curriculum in collaboration with teachers, subject leaders and other members of the SLT.
- Communicate the agreed curriculum to the governing board on an annual basis.
- Ensure the curriculum is inclusive and accessible to all on a day-to-day basis.
- Assist teachers and subject leaders with the planning and implementation of the curriculum, ensuring their workload is manageable.
- Ensure the curriculum is implemented consistently throughout the school, ensuring any difficulties are addressed and mitigated as soon as possible.

The Role of the Subject Leader is to:

- Provide a strategic lead and direction, ensuring appropriate coverage of the curriculum.
- Keep up to date with developments in subject, at both national and local levels.
- Lead sustainable improvement through supporting colleagues and others.
- Monitor pupil progress.
- Provide efficient resource management.
- Review the way subjects are taught in the school and plan for improvement linking to whole school priorities.
- Ensure the School Improvement Plan priorities are monitored and consistently met.
- Monitor how their subjects are taught ensuring that appropriate teaching strategies are used.
- Reviewing curriculum plans for their key areas ensuring there is full coverage of the National Curriculum and that progression is planned for.
- Accurately judge standards within their subjects so they indicate the achievements of children at each key stage and indicate expectations of attainment.

The Role of the Class Teacher is to:

- Demonstrate a high level of knowledge of each subject they teach.
- Plan lessons with clear learning objectives that pupils understand.
- Demonstrate an enthusiasm for all themes and subjects.
- Know children as individuals, tailoring reaching to their needs.
- Identify barriers to learning and put strategies in place to overcome them.
- Build and maintain relationships with parents.
- Be able to accurately advise parents on how to further support their children at home.
- Reporting to parents on their child's progress across all areas of learning and development.
- To be an advocate of all learning to all learners.
- Be willing to be a learner as well as a teacher.
- Take on the responsibility for leading on a subject area.

- Act as a support partner for all other curriculum areas.
- Challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most of them.
- Use a variety of methods to enable all pupils to learn effectively and will manage pupils well, insisting on high standards of behaviour at all times.
- Use time, support staff and other resources effectively.
- Use dialogue with pupils about their progress and their next steps.
- Reflect on their personal strengths and weaknesses and to be proactive to plan their own professional development needs

The Role of the SENCO is to:

- Collaborate with the Executive Head, Head of School, Curriculum Leader and teachers to ensure the curriculum is accessible to all.
- Ensure teaching materials do not discriminate against anyone in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- Carry out SEND assessments where necessary and ensuring pupils receive the additional help they need.
- Liaise with external agencies where necessary to ensure pupils who require additional support receive it.

Review

- This policy is reviewed every two years by the SLT and the governor responsible for Curriculum.
- Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and relevant stakeholders.

APPENDIX A

Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised 2021

Programme progression Reception and Year 1 overviews.

This programme overview shows the progression of GPCs and tricky words that we teach term-by-term. The progression has been organised so that children are taught from the simple to more complex GPCs, as well as taking into account the frequency of their occurrence in the most commonly encountered words. All the graphemes taught are practised in words, sentences, and later on, in fully decodable books. Children review and revise GPCs and words, daily, weekly and across terms and years, in order to move this knowledge into their long term memory. Children need to learn to read as quickly as reasonably possible, so they can move from learning to read, to reading to learn, giving them access to the treasure house of reading. Our expectations of progression are aspirational yet achievable if schools maintain pace, practice and participation by all children. Children who are not keeping-up with their peers should be given additional practice immediately through keep-up sessions.

https://www.lettersandsounds.org.uk/uploads/images/Programme-Overview_Reception-and-Year-1.pdf