

Phonics & Early Reading 3I's Statement

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Birchwood, 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 Birchwood, 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 Birchwood, 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 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 everyday. In Reception, children make a strong start by beginning Phase 2 learning Week 2 of the Autumn term. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers and support their long term memory.

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.

Due to the transitional period we are currently going through, our Year 2 cohort of children are also receiving daily phonics lessons taken from *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* to close gaps and ensure they have the skills and knowledge to develop into fluent, confident and capable readers.

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.

Rapid Catch Up lessons ensure gaps are closed as quick as possible

We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 3 and above who is not fully fluent at reading or who 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: Guided Reading 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, in EYFS and Year 1, and ten children in Year 2. We use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids. Groups are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis. Support and monitoring is also carried out by the Reading Lead.

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 and comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.

In Reception these sessions start in Week 2. 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 1 and 2 the same structure and approach is taken to their reading sessions.

Home reading

Children are assigned their decodable guided reading book through our eBook system on a Tuesday after their first session with an adult. The physical book is then taken home on a Thursday 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 and the Reading page on our school website 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.

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 regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

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 and to address these gaps 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. In addition, it is used 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, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books; with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Years 3 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 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, 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 3 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+.

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.

By the end of KS1, children will be fluent at decoding to read.