



St John's

Church of England

Academy

Part of the



Durham &
Newcastle
Diocesan
Learning
Trust

PHONICS AND EARLY READING POLICY 2022-2023



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The context of our school

		Quintile	Information from
Total on Roll	252	Close to average	IDSR Feb 2022
On Roll Reception – Y6	208		Current
% Disadvantaged (FSM)	43%	Well above average	IDSR Feb 2022
% SEND Support	20%	Well above average	IDSR Feb 2022
% EHCP	1.2%	Below Average	IDSR Feb 2022
% Ethnic Minority	9%	NA	IDSR Feb 2022
% EAL	4%	Below Average	IDSR Feb 2022
Deprivation Indicator	0.34	5	IDSR Feb 2022
% Stability	89%	Above Average	IDSR Feb 2022
Attendance	94.18%		Current
Punctuality	69 lates		Current
Persistent Absence	13%		Current
FTE	0		Current

Intent

Phonics

At St. John's we strongly believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers, regardless of their circumstances and starting points. The school delivers phonics using Little Wandle, a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in our 3 Year Nursery 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 have effective strategies to decode unfamiliar words as they read. At St. John'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 wider curriculum. We have a strong focus on language acquisition for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects, particularly as many of our children start school with lower-than-average vocabulary.

Comprehension

At St. John'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 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

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

At St. John's phonics is taught for 30 minutes every 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 promptly 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 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 Little Wandle experts. 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 3, 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 a rapid 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 to address specific reading/writing gaps. These short, sharp lessons last 10 minutes and take place at least three times a week and are delivered by fully trained adults.

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.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's cognitive load. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- Decoding.
- Prosody: teaching children to read with 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 practise 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.

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 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 practise book to an adult over the weekend. At St. John's, we understand that our parents and carers can often find supporting their children with phonics daunting. We have therefore developed a system that ensures the children are fully confident in reading their book so that when they read to a parent/carer at the weekend, they are fully confident with the book. This minimises the expectations on our parents/carers and ensures they can support their children in the most effective way – by giving them lots of praise and watching their children read bursting with pride!

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

Every member of staff in our school has been trained to teach phonics using the Little Wandle approach. Therefore, expectations of progress are consistent. All staff use the same language, routines and resources to teach the children to read so that we reduce children's cognitive load and free up the working memory for reading. *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 Early Reading Lead 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.

Fostering a love of reading

'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. Story sessions are timetabled to take place 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. John's and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.

Every classroom has an inviting book area 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 and Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day as part of their continuous provision and the books are continually refreshed according to the current theme.

Children in Reception onwards have a home reading journal. 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.

As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors they have read. Children are encouraged to verbally review books and make recommendations for their peers.

We build in a trip to the local Waterstones each year. Many of our children have never been to a book shop and we consider it an essential childhood experience.

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 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.

The *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* placement assessment is used:

- With any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment is used:

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

Ongoing assessment for catch-up

Children in Year 2 to 6 are assessed through:

- Their teacher's ongoing formative assessment
- The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds placement assessment
- Standardised reading assessments.