



Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact Statement

Our Intent

The systematic teaching of phonics has a very high priority throughout the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, and beyond at Darwen St James'. We value reading as a key life skill and are dedicated to enabling our children to become lifelong readers. We acknowledge that children need to be taught the key skills in segmenting and blending to be equipped with the knowledge to be confident readers who are able to comprehend texts. We also encourage children to read for enjoyment and recognise that this starts with the foundations of acquiring letter sounds alongside early segmenting and blending skills.

Our intent is to ensure that all children become fluent, expressive, and engaged readers at the very earliest stages, underpinning our broader academy goal to significantly improve writing outcomes. These fundamental literacy skills not only hold the keys to the rest of the curriculum but also have a huge impact on children's self-esteem and future life chances. Grounded in our Christian vision, we aim to ensure that by acquiring these skills, all children will overcome barriers, develop a growth mindset, and achieve great things as they progress through school.

Implementation

Phonics is implemented through Bug Club Phonics, a validated, systematic synthetic phonics programme that meets all criteria set out by the Department for Education.

Early Years Foundations

In our Nursery, implementation begins with a heavy focus on communication, language, and physical foundations in line with EYFS Development Matters. Nursery staff deliver daily Phase 1 phonics sessions concentrating on sound discrimination, rhythm, rhyme, and oral blending alongside targeted gross and fine motor skills activities to prepare children physically for writing. In the preschool year, children transition to reading sessions using wordless books to understand story structures, learn book behaviours, and practice reading from left to right.

Daily Phonics and Boosters

From Reception onwards, phonics is taught daily through fast-paced, structured whole-class sessions. To secure retention, regular drip-fed boosters are delivered across the school day. Reception and Year 1 children receive an additional targeted phonics booster in the afternoon to consolidate learning. Phonics mats are readily available across all classrooms from Key Stage 1 through Key Stage 2, providing a constant visual reference to support independent writing and vocabulary application across the curriculum.

Reading Practice and Decodable Books

We prioritise daily reading practice, delivered by fully trained learning support assistants and class teachers. Reading practice books are closely matched to each child's current phonics knowledge to ensure they only encounter grapheme-phoneme correspondences they have already been taught, ensuring instant success. For home learning, these decodable books are allocated directly to the child's online library so success can be shared with the family. Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children, supported by parental workshops and leaflets outlining the impact of early literacy.

Targeted Support, SEND, and EAL

We operate a strict keep-up, not catch-up model. Teachers use Phonics Tracker to regularly assess children, pinpoint precise gaps, and plan immediate interventions. Children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 who are identified as working below expected levels or receiving keep-up sessions read their practice book to an adult daily. This high-quality phonics intervention and daily tracking continues robustly into Key Stage 2 for any pupils still requiring phonological support.

Thoughtful adaptations are built-in for children with SEND across all four broad areas of need, utilising visual tools like Widget and Clicker. For children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), staff explicitly model sound articulation, provide heavy visual prompts, and pre-teach key vocabulary to ensure language barriers do not prevent phonics progression.

Impact

The impact of our phonics curriculum is that children at Darwen St James' develop into confident, fluent, and enthusiastic readers and writers who are thoroughly equipped for the next stage of their education.

Our regular use of Phonics Tracker ensures that pupil progress is monitored systematically, allowing us to rapidly close learning gaps and sustain high vocabulary and decoding outcomes. Through the combination of online decodable books, daily adult-led reading, and cross-curricular phonics mats, children develop strong reading stamina and high sentence accuracy.

Ultimately, the impact goes beyond academic metrics; by securing these fundamental reading and spelling foundations early, we build resilient learners with high self-esteem who live out our school values of perseverance and hope, successfully unlocking the wider curriculum and flourishing as positive citizens of tomorrow.