



Milverton Community Primary and Pre-School

Phonics and Early Reading Policy 2025-2026

**Date: September 2025
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Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Intent

At Milverton Community Primary and Pre-School, we firmly believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers, the direct teaching of which, starts with Phonics. Therefore, children in Pre-School participate in planned speaking and listening activities, as well as Phase 1 phonics, that are matched to their developing needs. Adults draw upon observations and continuous assessment to ensure children are stretched and challenged and to identify children who may need additional support. In Reception and Year 1, children follow Pearson Bug Club Phonics, which is a Department for Education validated systematic and synthetic phonics programme. The programme ensures that children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. At Milverton, we 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 understand that vocabulary, speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects. At Milverton, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, we expect that all children will have acquired the skills necessary to read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure and purpose. Through a relentless and rigorous approach to the teaching of phonics and early reading, our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar words as they read.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Pre-School

- From the earliest opportunity, we ensure that children become attuned to the sounds around them and begin to develop oral blending and segmenting skills.
- 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.

Daily phonics in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 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. At the end of each Pearson Bug Club Phonics unit, we review the teaching to help children become fluent readers.

- Children make a strong start in Reception: direct teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We follow the Pearson Bug Club Phonics 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.

Differentiation to ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional support will have either differentiated learning or daily keep-up support, either in a separate nurture group or with daily one-to-one tuition taught by a fully trained adult. Differentiated learning, nurture group work or one-to-one tuition all 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 Phonics Tracker to assess the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach at pace to catch these children up.
- 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.

Teaching reading

- When children in Reception have completed the first two units of Pearson Bug Club Phonics, they will have acquired a sufficient number of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to start reading their own books.
- Children begin to read books on an individual basis working with trained staff.
- In these sessions the adult will focus on:
 - decoding: the process of working out how to say an unfamiliar word
 - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.

Home reading

- Phonetically decodable reading books are taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
- The children have access to the online portal on the Pearson Bug Club Phonics website, which allows them to access online phonetically decodable books.
- We use Pearson Bug Club Phonics 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.
- Once children have completed their phonics learning and reading at Phase 5, they will have access to a set of high-quality reading books offering progression and encouraging and supporting children's language and comprehension skills.

Additional reading support

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving differentiated or additional phonics sessions read to an adult daily.
- Other children identified by trained staff will also read to an adult daily.

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.
- Children are encouraged to read books more than once in order to develop fluency and internalise story structure.
- We all use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load (a Glossary of Terms can be found [here](#)).
- Lesson templates, Teaching and Assessment Guides and 'How to' videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- The English Coordinator takes part in regular learning walks; teaching is planned in teams and staff observe each other to ensure there is consistency.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

At Milverton Community Primary and Pre-School, we love reading and value the many benefits that it provides. We believe it is key for academic success, and it plays a big part across our Curriculum on a daily basis. We promote a reading culture that inspires children to love reading, makes them want to read and helps them to develop into avid and life-long readers.

- We read to children every day in all classes from books on our reading spine. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Milverton Community Primary and Pre-School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting class library that encourages a love for reading. We talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- In Pre-School and Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their Independent Learning Time and the books are continually refreshed.
- 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.
- Each class from Year R-Year 6 has an author of the term, which gives each class a set of books to focus on each half term.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events such as: book fairs, author visits and workshops and national events such as World Book Day.

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
 - at the end of each Pearson Bug Club Phonics unit to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- Summative assessment is used:
 - at the end of each half term, 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 the English Coordinator and scrutinised, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- Statutory assessment
 - Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Appendix 1

Pearson Bug Club Phonics: Programme progression Reception to Year 1 overviews.

Table 1 Units 1–12 of *Bug Club Phonics Reception (Primary 1)*

Phase	Unit	Focus	Not fully decodable words (irregular words)
2	1	s, a, t, p	
	2	i, n, m, d	
	3	g, o, c, k	to
	4	ck, e, u, r	the, no, go
	5	h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss	I, into, her
3	6	j, v, w, x	me, be
	7	y, z, zz, qu	he, my, by, she
	8	ch, sh, th, ng	they
	9	ai, ee, igh, oa oo (long), oo (short)	we, are
	10	ar, or, ur, ow, oi	you
	11	ear, air, ure, er	all, was, give, live
4	12	Adjacent consonants (cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc)	said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what

The following table (Table 2) shows what is covered in each of Units 13–30, the Key Stage 1 (Primary 2 & 3) part of the programme.

Table 2 Units 13–30 of *Bug Club Phonics Key Stage 1 (Primary 2 & 3)*

Phase	Unit	Focus	Irregular/high-frequency words
5	13	wh, ph,	oh, their, people
	14	ay, a-e, eigh/ey/ei (long a)	Mr, Mrs, Ms
	15	ea, e-e, ie/ey/y (long e)	looked, called, asked
	16	ie, i-e, y, i (long i)	water, where
	17	ow, o-e, o/oe (long o)	who, again
	18	ew, ue, u-e (long o), u/oul, (short oo)	thought, through
	19	aw, au, al	work, laughed, because
	20	ir, er, ear	Thursday, Saturday, thirteen, thirty
	21	ou, oy	different, any, many
	22	ere/eer, are/ear	eyes, friends
	23	c, k, ck, ch	two, once
	24	c(e)/c(i)/c(y), sc/ st(l) se	great, clothes
	25	gle/gli/gly, dge	it's, I'm, I'll, I've
6	26	le, mb, kn/gn, wr	don't, can't, didn't
	27	tch, sh, ea, zh, (w)a, o	first, second, third
	28	suffix morphemes ing, ed	clearing, gleaming, rained, mailed
	29	plural morphemes s, es	men, mice, feet, teeth, sheep
	30	prefix morphemes re, un prefix+root+suffix	vowel, consonant, prefix, suffix, syllable

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms

Adjacent consonants

Two or more letters that represent two or more phonemes, e.g. 'fr' beginning the word 'fridge'.

Alien words

A child-friendly term for 'pseudo-words'.

Alternative pronunciation

A different way of pronouncing a grapheme. For example, the letters 'ow' can represent the sounds /ow/ as in 'crown' and /oa/ as in 'snow'.

Alternative spelling

A different way of spelling a phoneme. For example, the sound /w/ can be represented in writing by 'w' as in 'wave' and 'wh' as in 'what'.

Blend

Drawing together the constituent phonemes of a written word in order to read it. Practice in oral blending is very helpful, both before and during the process of learning to read. It is important to understand that blending sounds into a word is not simply a matter of saying them more quickly, nor of mixing them together like paint. Phonemes need to be joined into one continuous stream of sound to make a spoken word. Extensive practice, following teacher modelling, is the key.

Compound word

A word made by joining two individual words together, for example, 'houseboat' is 'house' + 'boat'.

Digraph

Two successive letters that represent one phoneme, e.g. 'oa', 'ck', etc. This can be reinforced by saying 'Two letters, one sound,' when working with the children.

GPC

This stands for grapheme–phoneme correspondence, the sound–letter relationship between each element of the alphabetic code.

Grapheme

Letter or combination of letters that represent a phoneme, e.g. 'r', 'ch'.

Homograph

Homographs are words that have the same spelling but different meanings, for example, 'pen' (writing implement) and 'pen' (animal enclosure).

Homophone

Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings or meanings, for example, 'prey' and 'pray'.

Irregular words

Not fully decodable words. These words are referred to as 'Tricky words' in *Letters and Sounds*.

Mnemonic

Any simple device used to assist memory. In this programme, it is a combination of an engaging picture with a letter and is used as a 'hook' to help children remember a particular GPC when they first learn it.

Multi-syllable word

A word with more than one syllable. Syllables are easy to recognise when words are spoken, but hard to distinguish in printed words until you know how to say them. The best way for children to learn to recognise syllables is to count (or clap) them when reciting known rhymes, songs, and so on.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound that changes a word's meaning; it can be represented by one or several letters, e.g. /a/ or /sh/.

Prefix

A recognisable unit of language added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. For example, 'rewrite' is 'write' with 're-' added at the beginning, so 're-' is the prefix. Examples of other common prefixes are 'un-', 'dis-', 'sub-'. Prefixes usually carry a particular meaning, whatever word they are applied to.

Pseudo-words

Simple, phonetically plausible 'words' that don't actually occur in the English language; used (as in the Phonics screening check) to assess whether a child can correctly read a word they haven't seen before, using phonic decoding; use should be confined to assessment.

Segment

Breaking down the sounds of a spoken word into phonemes in order to spell it.

Sound button

A graphic device to help children recognise the separate phonemes in a printed word. Sound buttons can be used as a support in the early stages of learning. For each word, a dot is placed under any single-letter grapheme and a short horizontal line under the group of letters that form a digraph or trigraph, as shown below.

Split vowel digraph

A digraph representing a vowel sound where its two letters are split by an intervening consonant (for example, 'a_e' in 'take'). Despite having a consonant in between them, the two letters involved (here 'a' and 'e') still count as one digraph, making one sound. The vowel sound is pronounced at the position of the first of the two letters of the digraph (that is, in the middle of 'take'). At early learning stages, a split digraph is often highlighted with a short line joining the two halves of the digraph above the intervening consonant, as shown below.

Suffix

A recognisable unit of language added to the end of a word to change its form, such as the tense of a verb. For example, 'playing' is 'play' + '-ing', so '-ing' is the suffix. Examples of other common suffixes are '-er', '-ed', '-est'.

Trigraph

Three successive letters representing one phoneme, e.g. 'igh'.