Our Lady & St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Early Reading Policy

Mission Statement

We are inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ who is at the heart of all that we do.

Working in unity with our families, parish and community, we encourage and support the children to grow in faith and reach their full potential in a happy, caring and loving environment.

English Curriculum Intent Statement

It is our intent at Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, to provide the children with the foundations to speak, read and write fluently so that they develop a strong command and love of the spoken and written language of English. We intend that the children will be able to communicate, through their writing, reading, speaking and listening, their ideas and emotions clearly and creatively to and with others in the wider world.

Phonics Intent Statement

The Twinkl Phonics Programme offers a coherently planned sequence of lessons that supports the effective teaching of phonics within EYFS, KS1 and, where appropriate, KS2.

Through teaching The Twinkl Phonics Programme, Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School intends not only to provide children with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding essential for reading and writing, but also, to develop each child's confidence, resilience and engagement in phonics lessons and a love for reading and writing.

Our Commitment to Early Reading

At Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to delivering a high-quality, systematic approach to the teaching of early reading that is inclusive, evidence-informed, and designed to ensure all children succeed. Through the consistent use of a validated phonics programme, targeted support, and a language-rich environment, we strive to equip every child with the essential skills to decode, understand, and enjoy texts. Our approach recognises the diverse needs of learners and prioritises early intervention, fluency development, and fostering a lifelong love of reading.

Linked Policies

- English Policy
- Handwriting and Presentation Policy

Statutory Requirements

The National Curriculum in England (2014) states that English is a core subject which is compulsory at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

6.1 "Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject."

6.3 "Teachers should develop pupils' reading and writing in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge. Pupils should be taught to read fluently, understand extended prose (both fiction and non-fiction) and be encouraged to read for pleasure. Schools should do everything to promote wider reading. They should provide library facilities and set ambitious expectations for reading at home."

The national curriculum in England Key stages 1 and 2 framework document

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) recognises Communication and Language as one of three Prime Areas and Literacy (Reading and Writing) as one of four Specific Areas.

1.6 "The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development."

"It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading."

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five

The Reading Framework (2022) is non-statutory guidance which focusses on the early stages of teaching reading. The guidance, which aims to support schools meet their expectations around early reading as set out in the national curriculum and the EYFS statutory framework, underpins the importance of talk, stories and Systematic Synthetic Phonics in the teaching of reading.
The Reading Framework details the importance of showing 'fidelity' to a specific phonics programme to avoid confusing children by using mixed materials.

Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School have chosen to use The Twinkl Phonics Programme to teach phonics. Twinkl Phonics is a programme which has been validated by the Department for Education and therefore meets the essential core criteria for effective systematic synthetic phonics[1].

Systematic Synthetic Phonics

Synthetic phonics is a method of teaching reading and writing in which words are broken up into their smallest units of sound or 'phonemes'. Children learn to associate a written letter or group of letters, known as 'graphemes', with each phoneme. Sounds are then built up or 'blended' together into words for reading or, conversely, whole words are broken down or 'segmented' into their constituent sounds for writing.

Phonics Terminology

The following terminology should be used by all staff for the teaching and learning of phonics.

Phoneme	smallest unit of sound in a word
Grapheme	symbol of a phoneme, this could be one letter or a group of letters (i, ie, igh, i_e)
Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs)	the relationship between sounds and the letter or letters that represent that sound
Blending	building up of words from individual phonemes for reading
Segmenting	breaking down words into individual phonemes for reading
Tricky (Common Exception) Words	words that are not decodable at the child's current phonic level of understanding
Digraph	two letters that work together to make one sound (ee)
Trigraph	three letters that work together to make one sound (igh)
Mnemonic	an illustration that is designed to support the children's recognition of GPCs

The Four Cornerstones of Phonics

There are four key elements that children need to master in order to read and write fluently.

- Rapid recall of GPCs
- Rapid recall of tricky/common exception words
- Efficient blending skills
- Efficient segmenting skills

The four skills represent the cornerstones of phonics and must be practised every day to ensure children make the expected progress.

Rapid recall of GPCs

These are referred to within the Twinkl Phonics scheme as 'Sam's Sounds'. Children review and revisit Sam's Sounds at the beginning of each phonics lesson. When introducing children to the first 44 GPCs, it is important to use 'pure sounds'.

'Pure sounds' refers to the way of sounding phonemes without adding an extra 'uh', known as a schwa, at the end of each letter. Using pure sounds helps children to blend sounds for reading and segment words for writing, as no extra sounds are accidentally inserted into words.

For example:

- /s/ is pronounced as 'sss' instead of 'suh'.
- /t/ is pronounced as a very short bouncy sound instead of 'tuh'.

Rapid recall of tricky/common exception words

These are referred to as 'Tricky Words' in Levels 2-4 and 'common exception words' in Levels 5-6. Both have the same meaning but are given age-appropriate descriptions.

There are parts of some very common words in the English language that are not phonetically decodable. Some examples of these are 'to', 'the' and 'said'. Due to the frequency and usefulness of these common words, it is necessary to introduce them as 'tricky' or 'common exception' words at the earliest stages.

By introducing these words as a unique group that do not follow the usual phonics rules, it allows children to access a greater range of sentences for both reading and writing and to begin to build a bank of sight vocabulary.

Common exception words are introduced first as reading sight vocabulary and then are reintroduced later as spelling words.

Some Tricky Words are no longer tricky in later levels when children learn the spelling rule.

Efficient blending skills

Blending is the key skill in the development of word reading. Blending is the process of saying each individual phoneme that appears in a written word and then running the phonemes together to hear and say the word. For the process of blending to be as smooth and effective as possible, pure sounds must be used.

Secure, rapid recall of individual letter sounds, digraphs and trigraphs is crucial to enable children to blend words effectively.
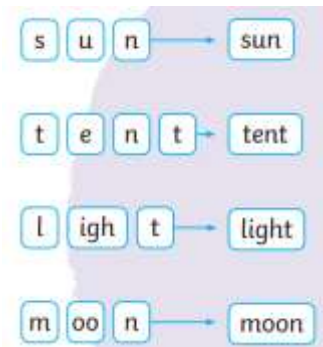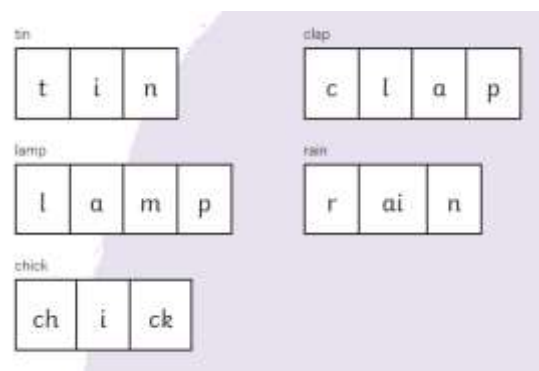

There are two types of blending;

- Oral blending – hearing the sounds and blending them together.
- Blending for reading – seeing and saying the sounds and blending them together.

Sound buttons can be used to support children with the transition between oral blending and blending for reading by identifying the sounds in words. Older children will be able to blend words by splitting them into syllables or 'words within words'.

Efficient segmenting skills

Segmenting is a key skill in the development of word writing. Segmenting is the process of breaking down a word into the individual phonemes in order to correctly spell the word. Children listen to, and identify, the phonemes in a word and then choose the correct grapheme or graphemes to represent them.

Children are encouraged to hold up their fingers as they hear each phoneme and to take particular care when choosing the GPCs to represent long vowel digraphs and trigraphs or adjacent consonants.

There are two types of segmenting;

- Oral segmenting – hearing a word and separating the sounds verbally.

- Segmenting for writing – hearing a word, separating the sounds and writing the GPCs as they say them.

<u>Robot Arms</u>

When learning to read, sometimes children can be asked to use their **reading robot arms**. This will involve children moving their arms up and down each time they say a phoneme from a word. Alternatively, an adult might segment a word as a reading robot and ask the children to use their blending skills to work out which word they said. The reading robot technique can help children to practice their segmenting and blending skills.

<u>Regional Accents</u>

Phonics is an approach that enables children to access as many words as possible through their knowledge of sounds. However, some sounds vary according to children's accents. At Our Lady and St Edward's, teaching of phonics reflects the northern region which is also incorporated within the Twinkl Phonics scheme.

<u>Adjusted Sounds</u>

Adjusted sounds appear where slight auditory adjustments are made in order to increase children's access to words that are almost decodable. Some very common words feature sounds/phonemes that are not taught until a later phonic level, but that without access to, will limit children's ability to read otherwise age-appropriate texts.

Examples of these within Level 2 are 'is', 'of', 'has' and 'dogs', which feature sounds that do not appear until Level 3 ('v', 'z'). These words are considered decodable at Level 2 as most children working within this level can make the auditory leap from /is/ to /iz/, /dogs/ to /dogz/ and from /of/ to /ov/, in order to read and pronounce the words.

Twinkl Phonics follows this approach (as it appears in Letters and Sounds and the Early Reading Framework) to ensure that children are able to decode as many words as possible from as early as possible and also to recognise that regional accents create variety, and therefore the need to 'tweak' or 'adjust' sounds as a matter of course.

<u>Rhymes for Learning Spelling Variations</u>

When introducing children to new spelling variations, teachers and staff will use consistent language to determine the different spellings "It's the _____ in _____."

e.g. When introducing the variations of the sound /ai/

ai	'It's the /ai/ in snail.'
ay	'It's the /ai/ in pray.'
a_e	'It's the /ai/ in cake.'
a	'It's the /ai/ in acorn.'

Planning and Organisation

Phonics lessons should be timetabled each day and, where possible, taught at the same time across all year groups.
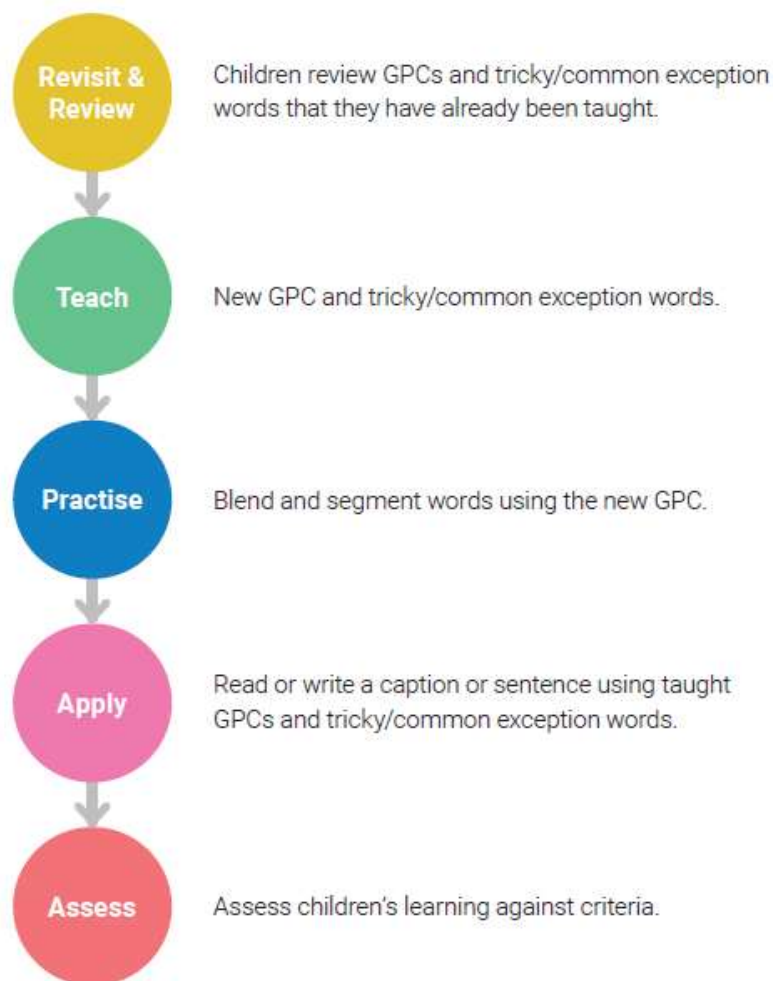
Phonics lessons should be engaging, well-paced and focussed on the phonics learning.

In phonics, children are introduced to letters and the corresponding sounds they make. Children learn to link a grapheme to a phoneme and this link is referred to as a grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC).

There are 44 phonemes in the English Language. These include the 26 letters of the alphabet plus consonant sounds such as /sh/ and /ng/ and long vowel sounds such as /ee/ and /igh/. Each phoneme is introduced systematically and at a fast pace. When learning the 44 phonemes, children should be introduced to around four new sounds per week, revisiting and practicing taught phonemes daily to ensure secure understanding and rapid recall.

The Twinkl Phonics scheme provides a variety of support scaffolds to aid children's learning of the first 44 GPCs, including stories, mnemonics (pictures that create a visual link to the GPC), actions, letter formation rhymes and songs. This multi-sensory approach helps children to access and secure this learning.

The structure of every phonics lesson follows a five-part pattern to ensure that all four cornerstones of phonics are covered:

Revisit & Review — Children review GPCs and tricky/common exception words that they have already been taught.

Teach — New GPC and tricky/common exception words.

Practise — Blend and segment words using the new GPC.

Apply — Read or write a caption or sentence using taught GPCs and tricky/common exception words.

Assess — Assess children's learning against criteria.

Progression Overview

Twinkl Phonics features six levels as part of its teaching sequence. There are 39 teaching weeks throughout the year. The teaching sequence allows time for assessment, breaks and collaboration.

Twinkl Phonics Level	Number of Teaching Weeks	Recommended Year Group	Age of Children
Level 1	36	Nursery/Preschool	3-4
Level 2	7	Reception	4-5
Level 3	12	Reception	4-5
Level 4	5	Reception	4-5
Level 5	30	Year 1	5-6
Level 6	30	Year 2	6-7

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment should enhance children's phonics development and reflect their current level of learning. Resources for use in phonics lessons should be kept organised and easily accessible. To support children's handwriting development, teachers should use <u>lined whiteboards</u> and <u>blue whiteboard pens</u> during phonics lessons.

Growing Sounds Display

A Growing Sounds Display should be used in each classroom and should include:

- Growing Sounds Display banner.
- All sounds children have previously learnt (at the beginning of the year, Year 1 will display all sounds taught in Rec and Year 2 will display all sounds taught in Year 1).
- Sounds should be added to the display as they are introduced so that the display grows with children's growing knowledge and understanding.
- Tricky Words banner.
- All Tricky Words (common exception words) that children have previously learnt (at the beginning of the year, Year 1 will display all Tricky Words taught in Rec and Year 2 will display all Tricky Words taught in Year 1).
- Tricky Words should be added to the display as they are introduced so that the display grows with children's growing knowledge and understanding.

Due to physical space in classrooms, it is not possible to display sounds in a linear progression. Teachers should try to group phonemes where possible to allow children to make links and distinguish between graphemes.

Additional Resources

In addition to a Growing Sounds Display, teachers can create a successful phonics learning environment by;

- Timetabling 'story time' each day.
- Having a tidy and organised classroom with resources clearly labelled.
- Having, and encouraging use of, a book corner/story area where children can access a range of books that are decodable at their level of phonetical understanding as well as books which are non-decodable but familiar to them (see Favourite Five*) so they can engage in retelling and access stories which are challenging.
- Having relevant additional resources available, such as;
  - Mnemonic sounds mats
  - Tricky/common exception word mats
  - Letter formation mats
  - Phoneme frames

Phonics Blasts

Teachers can make use of snippets of free time by practicing quick recall of GPCs and Tricky Words and oral blending, or blending for reading, to provide additional consolidation. This contributes to 'incidental phonics' and children do not need to be grouped for these sessions.

Book Corners

Each class within the Early Years and Key Stage 1, should have a book corner that reflects children's favourite books, books that are familiar to children and new and exciting books. Book corners should celebrate books and be inviting to children. This can be achieved by:

- Not displaying too many books at once
- Refreshing the display
- Making the books attractive and easy for children to find
- Including children's favourite books from the previous year
- Introducing new books gradually
- Displaying only the books that have previously been read aloud to children
- Sharing books from the book corner together as a class

Continuous Provision

In classes where continuous provision is used to support children's learning and development, teachers should consider the following

- Having a phonics area which reflects children's growing phonetical awareness.
- Having a mark making/writing area.
- Having opportunities for children to develop their fine-motor skills throughout the provision.

Assessment

Regular assessment ensures learners have a secure understanding of a range of sounds and phonic concepts. Assessment involves all staff and forms a vital part of every phonics lesson. Teachers use this regular, informal assessment to inform future planning and identify where 'in the moment' intervention is needed.

Formative assessment is used to monitor progress, determine groupings and identify need for intervention. This assessment will be completed by the Phonics Lead to ensure it is clear where every child is at in Rec and KS1 and to avoid inconsistencies in assessment. Discussions with Reading Teachers will inform assessments. Children will be assessed after each phonics level has been taught, or half-termly within the teaching of Level 5 and 6, to determine which sounds and concepts some learners may need to revisit or practice further.

Phonics Tracker is used for formative assessment in phonics. Reports generated from assessments will be shared with Reading Teachers. The version of Phonics Tracker used at Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School aligns to the progression of phonics in the Twinkl Phonics Programme.

Assessment schedules will be shared with Reading Teachers at the start of every academic year.

Statutory Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

The Phonics Screening Check is a statutory part of the curriculum for all children within Year 1. During the summer term, all children in Year 1 are tested in their ability to apply phonics knowledge to read a range of real and nonsense words. This is to check that they are able to apply the key phonics skills to all words, both known and unknown. The Phonics Screening Check is carried out by the Phonics Lead. Any children who do not pass in Year 1 will be retested in Year 2.

Additional resources, which link to the main teaching scheme, are available to support teachers in preparing children for the Phonics Screening Check.

Children are taught all sounds and GPCs needed for the Phonics Screening Check by the end of Level 5 of the Twinkl Phonics Programme.

Inclusion

A multisensory approach to teaching phonics is used to support all learning preferences and learning styles. Multisensory hooks are used when teaching new GPCs;
- Actions
- Songs
- Mnemonics

Groupings

We recognise that children will progress through the phonics scheme at different rates and ensure children are working at the level that is appropriate for them by adopting a flexible approach to groupings. The Phonics Lead will make decisions about groupings based on regular assessment. Where necessary, trained teaching assistants will teach groups of children to ensure that all children receive phonics teaching at the level appropriate to them.

Supporting the Lowest 20% Achievers

Regular assessment is vital to ensure the early identification of children who may need extra support either through intervention or during the daily classroom teaching. Teachers should take steps to provide the best possible support for these children by;

- Building a clear picture through regular assessment and discussions with the Phonics Lead
- Considering reasons for slower progress and, where relevant, liaising with the SENDCo
- Liaising with other adults or involving and offering support to parents

- Making reasonable adjustments during daily phonics teaching (such as setting clear, weekly targets or providing additional resources to support children's understanding)
- Making time for additional input (Phonics Blasts)

Intervention

1:1 Same Day Interventions

1:1 Same Day Interventions can be used to provide immediate intervention to children who have not met the learning expectations during the lesson or are working below age-related expectations. This type of intervention should be used by Reading Teachers to secure children's learning on a day-to-day basis, as and when it is needed for individual children. Due to the nature of these sessions, tracking is not necessary.

Key Stage 1 Intervention Packs

KS1 Intervention Packs are available for Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. They should be used after children have completed all teaching sessions for the specific level and after assessment has taken place. They are aimed at children who would benefit from revisiting and relearning all of the levelled phonics skills as part of a series of targeted intervention sessions. The session plans are scripted to ensure consistency and high quality teaching. They follow a consistent five-part lesson structure for those children who thrive on predictability and Assessment Trackers should be used at the end of each session and end of intervention assessments should take place to determine the impact of the intervention. Central packs of supporting resources are available to support the delivery of these sessions and reduce the need to print and prepare resources for individual sessions.

KS2 Twinkl Codebreakers Intervention

Twinkl Codebreakers supports children in KS2 who are working below age-related expectations and need further phonics intervention (available for Levels 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Codebreakers is a scripted intervention programme designed specifically for KS2 pupils to close the gap and develop essential reading and writing skills. Children work from individual Codebreaker Log Books which can be taken into classrooms and used as a resource to support all areas of learning.

Parental Involvement

Parents and carers are invaluable allies in helping to support children's learning, especially if they understand and use the same techniques at home.

Our Lady and St Edward's promote the involvement of parents and carers in children's development of phonics and early reading by;
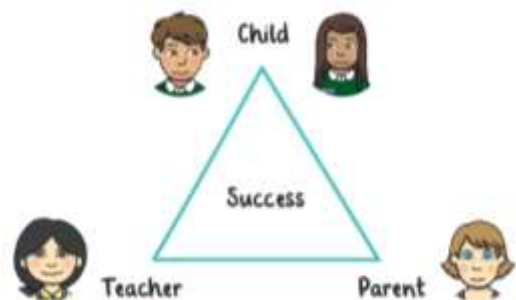
- Holding a phonics workshop/information event in the autumn term of each year.
- Sending home letters, where relevant, to update, refresh and inform parents of the teaching of phonics and early reading.
- Sending home Parent Information Sheets after introducing each new sound.
- Sharing useful information via the school website and regularly updating the content to reflect children's learning in class.
- Sharing information about the Phonics Screening Check and providing resources for parents to support their child in preparing for the assessment.
- Discussing pupil's phonics development with parents at Parent's Evenings.

- Including information about children's learning and development in reading and writing in end of year reports.
- Reporting to parents about children's achievement in the Phonics Screening Check.

Home Reading Books

Decodable Reading Books

In order to apply their decoding and comprehension reading skills, it is important that children have plenty of opportunities to read texts that are fully decodable at the appropriate phonics level.

Children should be reading take-home books at 90% fluency and should not be reading texts that are too easy or beyond their phonics level or understanding. Decodable texts should only contain the sounds and tricky (common exception) words that children know, allowing them to read with fluency and confidence while applying their developing skills effectively.

Our Lady and St Edward's uses books from a variety of reading schemes which have been carefully aligned to ensure they are fully decodable and matched to The Twinkl Phonics Programme.

At the teacher's discretion, once children have completed Level 5, and only if they have passed the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check, they will move away from decodable texts and work their way through the Levels according to teacher assessment. Children who are still 'learning to read' will continue to work through decodable books at Level 6.

Favourite Five

Favourite Five books are high quality texts that children know well. Each class in EYFS and KS1 have chosen a set of books to inspire a love of reading and give children access to 'a wide vocabulary and understanding grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language' in line with National Curriculum expectations. These books will be shared and enjoyed with children again and again.

In addition to 'decodable books', children can choose one of their Favourite Five to take home and share and enjoy with their families.

Promoting Fluency in Reading

At Our Lady and St Edward's, we recognise that fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension. Fluent readers are able to read accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression, enabling them to focus on making meaning from the text.

To promote fluency, we:

- Provide daily opportunities for practice through guided reading, repeated reading of decodable texts, and re-reading of familiar stories.
- Match books carefully to children's phonics knowledge so that they can read with at least 90% accuracy, building confidence and fluency.
- Model fluent reading by ensuring teachers regularly read aloud to children, demonstrating phrasing, intonation and expression.

- Use echo and choral reading to allow children to practise reading with rhythm and expression alongside a skilled adult.
- Encourage repeated reading of core texts and Favourite Five books to develop automatic word recognition and deeper understanding.
- Introduce and practise tricky/common exception words using Tricky Word Pyramids. This approach builds sentences step by step (e.g. I → I would → I would like ... I would like to give you a hug), enabling children to practise Tricky Words in meaningful contexts, develop fluency gradually, and experience success with longer sentences.
- Integrate fluency into assessment by monitoring not only accuracy but also pace, phrasing and expression during reading sessions.
- Support children at risk of falling behind through targeted interventions that provide additional structured practice in developing fluency.

Through these approaches, we aim to ensure that all children become fluent, confident and motivated readers who can fully engage with a wide range of texts.

Supporting Documents

National Curriculum in England (2014) Available at: National curriculum in England: English programmes of study - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) Available at: Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Reading Framework (2022) Available at: The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Twinkl Phonics Handbook: Version 10 (2022) Available at: Phonics Guidebook - Primary Resources (teacher made) (twinkl.co.uk)

Validation of systematic synthetic phonics programmes: supporting documentation (2022) Available at: Validation of systematic synthetic phonics programmes: supporting documentation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Written by:	Katie O'Donnell (Phonics Lead)	**Date:**	July 2025
Approved by:	Karen Woods (Headteacher)	**Date:**	September 2025
Last reviewed on:	July 2025		
Next review due by:	July 2027		

Appendix 1 – Completed Growing Sounds Display at the end of Level 6

Appendix 2 – Essential core criteria: Validation of systematic synthetic phonics programmes: supporting documentation

Essential core criteria

Published SSP programmes must meet all of the following essential criteria. Further explanatory notes are offered below. If your programme is new, or you are developing a programme based on Letters and Sounds, please also refer to the note for publishers of new programmes section.

The programme should:

1. constitute a complete SSP programme providing fidelity to its teaching framework for the duration of the programme (see note 1)
2. present systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print (see note 1)
3. enable children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills early in reception, and provide a structured route for most children to meet or exceed the expected standard in the year one (Y1) Phonics Screening Check and all national curriculum expectations for word reading through decoding by the end of key stage 1
4. be designed for daily teaching sessions and teach the main grapheme-phoneme correspondences of English (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
5. begin by introducing a defined group of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that enable children to read and spell many words early on
6. progress from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills, cumulatively covering all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences in English
7. teach children to read printed words by identifying and blending (synthesising) individual phonemes, from left to right all through the word
8. teach children to apply the skill of segmenting spoken words into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words
9. provide opportunity for children to practise and apply known phoneme-grapheme correspondences for spelling through dictation of sounds, words and sentences
10. ensure that children are taught to decode and spell common exception words (sometimes called 'tricky' words), appropriate to their level of progress in the programme (see note 2)
11. provide resources that support the teaching of lower-case and capital letters correctly, with clear start and finish points. The programme should move children on by teaching them to write words made up of learned GPCs, followed by simple sentences composed from such words as well as any common exception words ('Tricky Words') learned (see note 3)
12. be built around direct teaching sessions, with extensive teacher-child interaction and involve a multi-sensory approach. The programme should include guidance on how direct teaching sessions can be adapted for online delivery (live or recorded) (see notes 4 and 5)
13. provide resources to enable teachers to deliver the programme effectively including sufficient decodable reading material (see notes 6 and 7) to ensure that, as children move through the early stages of acquiring phonic knowledge and skills, they can practise by reading texts closely matched to their level of phonic attainment, that do not require them to use alternative strategies to read unknown words (important, see note 7)

14. include guidance and resources to ensure children practise and apply the core phonics they have been taught [footnote 1] (see note 8)

15. enable children's progress to be assessed and highlight the ways in which the programme meets the needs of those who are at risk of falling behind, including the lowest attaining 20% of children (see note 9)

16. provide full guidance for teachers to support the effective delivery of the programme and appropriate, programme-specific training either directly, through appointed agents or remotely; with assurances that there is sufficient capacity to do so and that those delivering this training will have appropriately high levels of expertise and relevant experience (see note 10)