



St Aidan's

Church of England Primary Academy
A member of **CDARI**

'Fulfilling potential and growing in God.'



Acceptance, Love, Wisdom, Accountability, Youthfulness, Service

Our Vision

At St. Aidan's, not only do we want our children to become happy and well rounded individuals; we aim to nurture and equip children to be resilient, enthusiastic and effective communicators and learners who are able to use their experiences and technology skills to achieve their fullest potential allowing them to excel in the careers of the future and grow in God.

'I came that they may have life and live it to the full' John 10.10

Phonics Policy

Date of Policy: January 2026

Review Date: January 2027

Intent -Phonics (reading and spelling)

Our school was primarily attended by White children however recently a significant proportion of children who attend St. Aidan's have English as an additional language (EAL), reflecting the changing demographics of the local community. This academic year, well over half of our families are in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding (PPF). There are also a higher than average number of children on the SEND register who may have specific needs, including Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN), Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges, Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

At **St Aidan's Primary Academy**, 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 synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching Little Wandle Foundations from Reception 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 St Aidan's Primary Academy, 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 **St Aidan's Primary Academy**, 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.

Our phonics lead is highly skilled in 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 a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to full-length lessons as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- Research tells us that nursery rhymes can support children to develop their language, their awareness of sounds within words and even their later reading ([Bryant et al. 1989](#)). Therefore, we have weekly Rhyme Time sessions (which parents are invited to) to complement and reinforce our Phase 2 teaching.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* expectations of progress:
 - o 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.
 - o Children in Year 1 review Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPC's with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child in Reception and Year 1 who needs additional practice has Daily Keep-up support and is taught by a fully trained adult.
- Daily Keep-up lessons follow the Little Wandle progression and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition so that every child secures their learning.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

- Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed. Corresponding summative assessments are carried out to ensure this content is secure.

- Once all the Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.
- We use the Phase 5 review assessment before teaching in Year 2 to identify any children who may need more support when teaching. We reassess after teaching the Phase 5 review.
- Once the Phase 5 review is secure; we teach the Bridge to Spelling before moving to the Spelling units.

Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers have daily phonics teaching and follow the Rapid Catch-up programme.

- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above who is not at age-related expectations for 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.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15 to 20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.
- We assess children who are new to our school, new to the country or new to English using the Rapid Catch-up assessments to quickly identify their needs.
- We use the relevant assessments to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge and teach these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- We assess children at the end of each block using the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions

We teach reading practice four times a week in years 1 and 2 and twice a week in Reception. These:

-are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children

-use books matched to the children's phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and sounds assessments and book matching grids.

- 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 working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:
 - o decoding: teaching children to use phonic knowledge to read words(Session 1 &2)
 - o prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - o comprehension: using dialogic talk to help children to understand the text.
- In Year 2, we ensure children complete reading the core programme decodable books (up to Phase 5 Set 5). To exit the programme, we complete the final fluency assessment to ensure children can read with adequate speed and accuracy: approximately 60 words per minute with 90%+ accuracy.
- Reading in Rapid Catch-up lessons mirrors the core programme. Children following the Rapid Catch-up programme are taught to read using the 7+ fully decodable books. These follow the same progression as the core programme but are more appropriate for older readers.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. We monitor home reading using a document to track who has read at home and how many times. To encourage engagement we have a reader of the week for a child in each class who has read multiple times at home or who has made significant progress.
 - o Reading for pleasure books (Books We Know) also go home weekly. These books are not at their independent reading level, however they will have read these books at school so sit back and enjoy them telling you a story.
 - o 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 Daily Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book regularly to an adult in school.
- We prioritise children who may not have reading support at home or who may not have access to books. We ensure that they have individual reading times with volunteers and staff to share quality children's literature to promote a love of reading.

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

Ensuring reading for pleasure

'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 highly value reading for pleasure and work hard as a school to grow our reading for pleasure pedagogy.

- We read aloud to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including those that reflect the children at **St Aidan's Primary Academy** and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.

- Every classroom has an inviting book corner 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 Reception and Year 1, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free-flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children choose from our range of carefully chosen familiar books to take home and share with an adult. We keep a record of the children's choices, so we get to know them as readers.
- As children progress through school, we take time to get to know them as readers and ensure that we engage in meaningful conversations about the books that they have read. By doing this we can recommend authors and genres of books to expand their interests.
- Reception class have weekly visits to the local library.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (book fairs, author visits and workshops, national events etc).
- We use the Everybody read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

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 (AFL)** is used:
 - o daily within class to identify children who require Daily Keep-up support, as well as words and GPCs that need additional teaching. Everyday GPC's and unfamiliar words are noted and are recapped throughout the next sessions.
 - o to plan repeated practice throughout the day to ensure all children secure learning

- o weekly in the Friday review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessments** are uploaded onto the Assessments tracker for Reception and Year 1. These are used:
 - o to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups
 - o by teachers, Reading Leaders and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level
 - o by SLT to scrutinise and plan how to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers.

We assess:

- o every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be reviewed or retaught
 - o to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need
-
- A **placement assessment** is used:
 - o with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and to plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check resits it in Year 2.