



*'Loving God in all we do'*

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## PHONICS POLICY (2024)

### **Rationale**

At St Anne's Catholic Primary School, early reading is taught using synthetic phonics as the primary approach to reading. Children are systematically instructed in phonemes (sounds) and are taught to blend these sounds to read words, alongside learning to segment sounds for writing. Phonic skills and knowledge are emphasised as the first strategy for reading; however, children are also introduced to high-frequency words that do not conform entirely to phonetic rules.

The school implements the Bug Club Phonics Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) scheme, which is approved by the government. Daily phonics sessions employ a structured revisit-teach-practice-apply methodology. Additionally, reading materials are carefully aligned with the children's understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Staff utilise a range of hands-on interactive, multi-sensory resources to enhance and reinforce learning, ensuring a comprehensive and engaging approach to phonics education.

### **Intent**

We recognise the paramount importance of phonics in early literacy development. Using Bug Club, we aim to:

- Develop each child's ability to read with fluency and comprehension, nurturing a lifelong love of reading.
- Support children in writing phonetically, directly relating to their phonics knowledge.
- Establish consistent teaching practices, progression, and continuity in phonics education throughout the school.
- Implement rigorous assessment procedures that regularly monitor progress and identify those who may require additional support.
- Ensure that all beginner readers are well-prepared to engage in phonic work by the time they conclude their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- Provide children with a broad and rich language experience, equipping them to become proficient readers and granting them the best opportunity to access the wider curriculum successfully.

### **Implementation**

We follow the progressive planning of Bug Club to ensure a comprehensive phonics programme. Our children are provided with a variety of opportunities to develop and extend their phonics skills across Nursery, Reception, and Key Stage 1. Bug Club Phonics will continue into Key Stage 2 where necessary, supporting those children who do not yet possess the required phonics knowledge and skills. Our lessons incorporate pace, along with practical and interactive activities to engage all learners. These activities enhance skills in oral discrimination, phonemic and rhyme awareness, blending and segmenting, as well as grapheme-phoneme correspondence.

The implementation of phonics is vital for literacy development, commencing with Phase 2, where children learn the alphabet and associated sounds, allowing them to begin reading and writing simple words such as "sat" and "tin." Progressing to Phase 3, they master the remaining letters and explore sounds formed by letter combinations, like "sh." In Phase 4, children enhance their skills by blending and segmenting multi-syllable words, revisiting knowledge acquired in Phase 3. Phase 5 introduces various spellings for sounds, exemplified by "ay" in "play" and "ai" in "train." Finally, Phase 6 advances their understanding of complex spelling, emphasising suffixes and the past tense.

- Pre-phonics instruction in Nursery focuses on enhancing listening skills, sound identification, and developing rhyming and rhythm awareness. Significant emphasis is placed on fostering speech and language skills, alongside teaching oral blending and segmenting.
- Daily phonics and guided reading sessions, either as a whole class or in small groups, are conducted for 30 minutes in Reception and Key Stage 1.
- All staff undergo training, support, and regular observations to ensure consistency in phonics teaching across the school.
- Staff have access to well-structured planning through the *Active Learn* portal, aligned with Bug Club documentation.
- Fast-paced, structured lessons introduce new phonemes using imagery, alongside teaching high-frequency words as outlined in the Bug Club progression chart.
- Explicit phonetic vocabulary is incorporated within lessons, with a strong emphasis on teaching 'pure' sounds.
- Phoneme buttons are used to distinguish sounds within words.
- Robust assessment procedures track children's progress, with formal assessments conducted termly and summative assessments recorded to guide intervention strategies.
- Guided reading texts are closely aligned with phonics learning and are phonetically decodable.
- Well target interventions where necessary.
- Reading and writing using phonic knowledge is an integral part of teaching across the wider curriculum, promoted in every lesson, every day.

### **Impact**

Through implementing the above strategies and careful monitoring, the impact on children's phonetic knowledge is profound:

- Children will exhibit increased confidence in their understanding of phonics, enabling them to blend and segment words with assurance, which is essential for developing fluent reading skills.
- Furthermore, this enhanced phonic foundation will significantly contribute to our children passing the Phonics Screening Test, thereby validating their progress in this critical area of literacy.
- Importantly, the introduction of engaging yet challenging phonic activities is designed to cultivate a love for reading. By integrating fun experiences, children are motivated to explore literature, which is essential for their overall development.
- Children will learn to spell tricky words that do not adhere to standard phonetic patterns, further reinforcing their literacy skills.

Ultimately, this approach fosters a culture where a secure knowledge of phonic sounds underpins reading for pleasure, integral to our reading curriculum throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, and beyond.