ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

We give thanks to God, work together and always try our best.

Shining in little ways for all to see.

Policy owner: Phonics Lead

November 2026

Approval date: _____

Next review: November 2027, or sooner following relevant changes

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Purpose and scope

We want every child to become an accurate, fluent and confident reader who understands and enjoys books. Reading enables children to access the curriculum, communicate and participate fully in school life. Our provision combines systematic synthetic phonics with oral language, vocabulary, comprehension and reading for pleasure.

This policy covers Nursery, Reception and Key Stage One, and applies to any older pupil who still needs support with the foundations of reading. Pupils receive teaching matched to their assessed needs, with high expectations and timely additional support.

Our approach

- We teach Floppy's Phonics systematically and cumulatively, using the programme's progression, resources, terminology and teaching guidance.
- We begin systematic phonics at the start of Reception. Language and phonological awareness support continue alongside phonics; children do not wait to master every pre-phonics skill.
- Pupils practise reading texts matched to the grapheme–phoneme correspondences they have been taught and can use successfully.
- We identify gaps promptly and provide additional teaching and practice. Support continues into Key Stage Two for as long as it is needed.
- Every child hears high-quality texts read aloud and has opportunities to discuss language, stories, information and ideas.

Policy and implementation documents

The Phonics Lead maintains the current Floppy's Phonics progression and assessment schedule, including intended termly coverage, checkpoints and links between taught correspondences and reading resources. Staff use these alongside the programme handbooks. Leaders check that the timetable, staffing and resources enable the expectations in this policy to be delivered.

Curriculum and teaching

Nursery foundations

Nursery uses Super Sounds Pre-Phonics alongside language-rich provision to develop listening, attention and phonological awareness. Children explore environmental and instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds, and oral blending and segmenting. These experiences support later learning without becoming a readiness test for Reception phonics.

Daily stories, songs and rhymes, role play and purposeful conversation develop vocabulary and enjoyment of books. Adults use ShREC-informed interactions to share attention, respond, expand language and sustain conversation. Vocabulary Pyramids help staff introduce, revisit and apply useful words through meaningful experiences.

Launchpad for Literacy informs targeted support for identified developmental gaps. Staff select the relevant skills, establish a starting point and review progress with the EYFS Lead and SENCO. Support complements everyday interaction and curriculum access.

Reception

Daily Floppy's Phonics teaching starts at the beginning of Reception and follows the programme sequence. Children learn grapheme–phoneme correspondences, blend for reading and segment for spelling. They apply taught knowledge through programme activities, cumulative texts, reading and writing. Dictation takes place at least twice each week, progressing from sounds to words, captions and sentences as appropriate.

Year One

Daily Floppy's Phonics teaching extends and consolidates the alphabetic code, including alternative spellings and pronunciations. Pupils practise accurate blending, increasingly automatic word reading and spelling. Assessment informs immediate support and progression. Familiarisation with real and pseudo words sits within a broad phonics curriculum; screening preparation does not replace systematic teaching or reading connected text.

Year Two and older pupils

Teachers review phonics, word reading and fluency at the start of Year Two and at transition into Key Stage Two. Pupils with gaps continue systematic Floppy's Phonics teaching and matched decodable reading. Passing the screening check does not, by itself, establish that a pupil is fluent or ready to finish phonics support.

As decoding becomes secure, teaching develops fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and reading stamina. Spelling Shed supports the Year Two spelling curriculum, including common exception words, spelling patterns and morphology. It does not replace phonics teaching for pupils who still need it.

Consistent teaching and adult prompts

Staff follow the current Floppy's Phonics teaching and learning sequence rather than substituting a generic lesson model. Teaching includes explicit modelling, accurate sound pronunciation, cumulative review, supported practice and independent application. Staff teach the decodable and unusual parts of common exception words in line with programme guidance.

To identify an unfamiliar word, pupils look at the graphemes from left to right, say the corresponding sounds and blend. Adults prompt this process. Pupils are not taught to guess words from pictures, initial letters or sentence context. Pictures and context support discussion and understanding after word reading, rather than replace decoding.

Reading practice and books

Minimum reading provision

Daily phonics includes opportunities for all pupils to practise reading taught words and cumulative text. This is distinct from individual adult reading and additional intervention.

- Reception pupils have at least three individual reading practice sessions with a trained adult each week.
- Year One and Year Two pupils who are still developing decoding have at least three focused reading practice sessions with a trained adult each week, individually or in a small group with every pupil heard reading.
- Pupils identified through assessment as needing the most support, including the weakest readers, read individually with a trained adult every school day. This applies across Reception, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two as needed.
- For pupils who are secure decoders, teachers plan regular supported reading and fluency practice within the reading curriculum, checking individual progress.

Teachers plan and record provision so that these minimums are met. If a session is missed, it is rearranged promptly and any repeated loss of provision is reported to the Phonics Lead. Individual reading supplements, rather than substitutes for, focused phonics teaching where needed.

Matching books to pupils

The class teacher is accountable for book allocation; trained staff may select books using current assessment information and the programme's matching guidance. They check that the pupil knows the required correspondences and can blend the words successfully, including any previously taught exception words. Books are not selected by age, colour band alone or picture-reading ability.

Staff distinguish Floppy's Phonics Sounds Books, cumulative texts and fully decodable readers, using each for its intended purpose. They use the current programme guidance to identify the teaching required before each resource is used.

Wordless books may be shared from the start of Reception to develop storytelling, language and book handling. Suitable decodable words and texts are introduced as soon as the pupil has the knowledge and blending skills needed for that resource. There is no fixed half-term wait, and pupils do not have to complete an entire level before accessing its suitable cumulative practice.

Fluency and understanding

Reading practice develops accuracy and automaticity, with expression and phrasing modelled as pupils become secure. Adults use rereading, echo reading and supported reading as appropriate. They discuss vocabulary and meaning without allowing questioning to displace the pupil's reading practice. Pupils are not encouraged to race through texts.

The first reading of an allocated decodable reader is supported in school wherever practicable. Pupils reread familiar texts to build confidence and fluency. Home decodable books are reviewed weekly and changed according to secure knowledge and reading success; pupils may retain a book for further practice or move on earlier when appropriate.

Moving beyond decodable books

Teachers check secure decoding across the taught code, accurate reading of unfamiliar words and sufficient fluency to attend to meaning in connected text. These checks inform movement to a wider range of independently read books. Staff continue to monitor fluency and comprehension and reintroduce targeted support where needed. Listening comprehension through ambitious shared texts develops throughout, including while pupils are learning to decode.

Assessment and additional support

Assessment cycle

Teachers assess responses daily and record specific gaps that require action. Assessment checks recognition and application of grapheme–phoneme correspondences, oral and printed-word blending, segmenting for spelling, real and pseudo-word decoding, and reading accuracy and fluency in connected text. Reading discussion also informs assessment of vocabulary and understanding.

Staff use current Floppy's Phonics assessments at programme checkpoints. The Phonics Lead checks the school schedule against the current handbook and online guidance. Reception checkpoints in the existing school sequence follow Sounds Books 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 15 and 18; any changes are recorded in the implementation schedule.

Teachers and the Phonics Lead review each pupil's progress at least half-termly. In Year One, Little Alien Words and appropriate screening-style materials contribute to assessment alongside diagnostic GPC checks and connected-text reading. Screening scores alone do not determine teaching or book allocation. Termly pupil progress meetings review progress, provision and unresolved barriers.

Keep up and catch up

Teachers address misconceptions during lessons where possible and arrange short additional teaching promptly when assessment identifies a gap. Identified pupils receive daily phonics keep-up or catch-up on school days, alongside their main teaching. Sessions use Floppy's Phonics approaches and resources and focus on the precise knowledge or skill that needs strengthening.

The class teacher specifies the target and ensures that the adult delivering support understands the teaching approach. The Phonics Lead coordinates staffing, resources and coaching. Teachers review response weekly and formally evaluate progress at least half-termly. Where progress remains limited, they adjust teaching, practice or intensity and involve the Phonics Lead and SENCO; pupils do not remain in unchanged provision without review.

Interventions and attendance registers are recorded on Arbor. Records identify the assessed starting point, target, frequency, responsible adult, review date and outcome. Attendance records demonstrate delivery; reassessment and pupils' reading demonstrate impact.

Inclusion and barriers

Pupils with SEND access systematic phonics with appropriate adaptations, such as smaller steps, additional repetition, accessible resources, communication support and individual teaching. Staff maintain the programme sequence where appropriate and seek specialist advice for complex needs. Bespoke approaches are documented through assess, plan, do and review and evaluated against meaningful individual outcomes.

EAL pupils receive explicit vocabulary and language support alongside phonics. Staff distinguish learning English from a special educational need. For disadvantaged pupils and those with limited opportunities to read at home, school practice is protected; access to support does not depend on parental diary signatures.

Following absence, teachers identify missed correspondences and provide prompt catch-up. New pupils receive an initial reading and phonics assessment promptly after entry so that provision and books can be matched without waiting for the next whole-class checkpoint.

Reading culture and families

Vocabulary and comprehension

Adults explicitly introduce and explain useful vocabulary, model words in context and revisit them through conversation, stories and curriculum learning. Pupils hear ambitious language through texts beyond their independent reading level. Staff develop listening comprehension through discussion, retelling and exploring characters, events and information from the earliest stages.

Reading for pleasure

All classes have daily story time and regular access to high-quality fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Texts reflect our Catholic ethos, celebrate diversity and broaden pupils' experience. Teachers help children make choices, recommend books and discover authors. Inviting classroom reading areas, the school library, author studies and book events support everyday reading enjoyment.

Phonics displays use programme-consistent graphemes, terminology and resources. Displays reflect taught learning, remain accessible and support pupils without introducing competing prompts or word-guessing strategies.

Home reading

Pupils learning to decode take home a carefully matched decodable text for frequent rereading. Families are encouraged to practise it daily in short, positive sessions. A separate reading-for-pleasure book is available for an adult to read aloud or share; this may be beyond the child's independent decoding level.

Staff show families how to pronounce sounds, encourage blending, support a difficulty and reread for fluency. Families are encouraged to talk about vocabulary and meaning, praise effort and avoid prompting guesses from pictures or context. Guidance is shared through workshops, curriculum sessions, stay-and-learn opportunities, school communications and available Floppy's Phonics online resources.

Parents and carers are asked to sign, date and briefly comment in the reading diary when they hear their child read. Teachers review diaries to communicate and identify where a family may need help. Staff work sensitively with families and provide additional school practice where home reading is difficult.

Phonics screening check

The school follows the current Standards and Testing Agency assessment and reporting arrangements. Eligible Year One pupils take the check; eligible Year Two pupils who have not previously taken it or have not met the expected standard also participate. Any decision that a pupil should not take the check follows the current participation guidance and is recorded by the headteacher, with parents informed as required.

The headteacher ensures appropriate staff training, access arrangements, secure handling, accurate administration, results submission and reporting to parents. Staff use the current annual guidance for dates and detailed procedures. Teaching continues to address individual gaps after the check, including for pupils who meet the threshold but remain hesitant readers.

Leadership monitoring and review

Responsibilities

The headteacher ensures sufficient curriculum time, staffing, training and resources; confirms who holds the Phonics Lead role; and checks that the provision described in this policy is delivered. Senior leaders address barriers identified through monitoring and report progress to governors.

The Phonics Lead maintains the programme progression and assessment schedule, checks book matching, analyses individual and cohort outcomes, coordinates additional support and coaches staff. All adults delivering phonics or reading practice receive initial training and ongoing support. Cover arrangements protect the agreed teaching approach.

The EYFS Lead oversees Nursery language provision, Super Sounds Pre-Phonics, Launchpad for Literacy and transition into Reception. The SENCO advises on adaptations, specialist input and the impact of support for pupils with SEND. Class teachers retain responsibility for every pupil's reading progress, assessment, book allocation and intervention review.

Governors scrutinise attainment, progress, provision and resource use through reports and focused visits. They consider the experience and progress of pupils needing the most support and follow up leaders' agreed actions.

Monitoring and follow through

The Phonics Lead completes a planned monitoring cycle at least termly across Reception and Key Stage One, including relevant Key Stage Two provision. Monitoring samples lesson delivery, pupils' reading, book matching, assessments and intervention delivery. Leaders also check pupils' access to daily stories, language development and reading for pleasure.

Each monitoring activity records strengths, specific actions, the responsible person and a review date. Leaders revisit actions to check that practice has improved. Where teaching or provision is inconsistent, coaching and follow-up occur promptly rather than waiting for the next termly cycle.

Evaluating impact

Leaders evaluate whether pupils retain and apply the taught code, read accurately and increasingly fluently, understand texts and engage positively with reading. They examine Reception progress, Year One screening outcomes, progress by the end of Year Two and outcomes for older pupils receiving support. Analysis includes SEND, disadvantaged pupils and other relevant groups while protecting confidentiality in small cohorts.

Success is evidenced through pupils' reading and progress from their starting points, supported by assessment and delivery records. Completing an intervention or passing a screening check is not the sole measure of successful reading development.

References and related policies

Statutory sources: the current EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers; relevant National Curriculum English requirements; current phonics screening check assessment and reporting arrangements; the SEND Code of Practice; and applicable Equality Act duties. The school applies these in accordance with its academy obligations.

Non-statutory and programme guidance: the DfE Reading Framework; current Floppy's Phonics teaching handbooks, progression, reading and assessment guidance. Related school policies: SEND, Teaching and Learning, Assessment and the wider reading curriculum.

Reference links
DfE Reading Framework: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-reading-framework-teaching-the-foundations-of-literacy
Phonics screening arrangements: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara
Floppy's Phonics guidance: https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/reading-schemes-oxford-levels/floppys-phonics/

Floppy's Phonics in daily practice

This section sets out the school's implementation of Floppy's Phonics INSET webinar guidance. These programme practices support the teaching expectations in this policy.

READ	SPELL	WRITE
See the graphemes	Say the word	Say the sound
Say the sounds	Segment the sounds	Form the letter
Blend the word	Choose the graphemes	Write on a line
cat → /k/ /a/ /t/ → cat	cat → /k/ /a/ /t/ → c a t	Apply in words and sentences

Teach and practise the three core skills

Staff teach decoding for reading, encoding for spelling and handwriting together. Pupils practise reading cumulative words and text, segmenting spoken words and forming the corresponding letters. Teachers model letter formation and provide suitable writing lines, seating and pencil support. Mini whiteboards may support brief checks but do not replace cumulative printed reading material or practice on paper.

Use systematic and incidental teaching

The planned Floppy's Phonics sequence remains the main route through the alphabetic code. Alongside it, adults explain unfamiliar sound–spelling correspondences encountered in stories, names or curriculum learning, referring to an alphabetic code chart where useful. Adults supply the unfamiliar correspondence and help the pupil blend; they do not prompt guessing. Incidental explanation does not change the planned sequence or justify allocating unsuitable independent reading books.

Give feedback during practice

Adults observe each pupil's reading, spelling and letter formation and address errors promptly. Pupils can mark secure graphemes or words and identify items they need help with; adults check accuracy rather than relying on self-assessment. Brief annotations identify useful next steps without duplicating assessment records. Spelling practice includes supported checking and correction.

Use the programme for additional support

Keep-up and catch-up revisit the relevant programme activity sheets, word banks and cumulative texts. Staff increase modelling, repetition and individual practice in response to assessment. They retain consistent terminology and routines, avoiding competing phonics systems. Any supplementary resource is checked by the Phonics Lead for compatibility with the programme and the pupil's taught code.

Pupil phonics folders and practice books

Each pupil following Floppy's Phonics has a personal phonics folder and a lined phonics practice book. These keep cumulative practice available to the pupil, staff and family. Resources are selected from the school's licensed programme materials; the illustrations below show organisation, not reproductions of commercial worksheets.

PHONICS FOLDER

- Alphabetic code chart
- Alphabet and sound prompts
- Cumulative activity sheets
- Words, sentences and texts
- Selected spelling word banks

PHONICS PRACTICE BOOK

- Letter formation on writing lines
- Spelling and supported correction
- Dictated sounds, words and sentences
- Application and extra practice
- Brief feedback and next steps

Keep resources cumulative and accessible

Teachers add activity sheets, cumulative sentences or texts and relevant word banks in teaching order. The folder is an active resource for revisiting learning, not simply a store of completed work. Its visual prompts and cumulative material remain available for short, frequent practice beyond the main lesson. Pupils revisit vocabulary and meaning as well as reading, spelling and handwriting, developing confidence and automaticity. The lined practice book records handwriting, spelling, dictation and application.

Connect school and home practice

Folders travel between home and school as part of the book-bag routine, with clear guidance on what to practise. They show families the learning introduced and support consistent prompts across teachers, teaching assistants, cover staff and other supporting adults. Staff demonstrate sounding and blending, segmenting and letter formation. Teachers provide sufficient school practice where home practice is difficult; missing folders or unsigned diaries do not prevent teaching or support.

Personalise practice and check progress

Teachers personalise practice using the relevant cumulative contents, selecting taught correspondences, words and texts that address assessed gaps. Pupils needing more repetition revisit these with a trained adult, using consistent programme terminology and routines. Supplementary resources must be checked by the Phonics Lead for compatibility. The Phonics Lead samples folders and books alongside hearing pupils read, checking book matching, practice, feedback and progress. Records remain proportionate and avoid duplication.

Programme reference: Floppy's Phonics INSET webinar course notes, especially printed pages 20–22. Read the course notes