



Phonics Handbook

Kirk Fenton CE Primary School



Phonics in Early Years and Key Stage One



Intent

At Kirk Fenton, we believe that secure phonics knowledge is essential for children to become confident, fluent readers and writers. Our intent is to deliver a systematic, structured and inclusive phonics programme that enables all children to develop a secure understanding of the alphabetic code and make strong progress from their starting points. We also recognise the importance of speech, language and communication in supporting reading and writing across the curriculum.

Implementation

We teach phonics using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised systematic synthetic phonics programme. Phonics teaching begins in Reception and follows a clearly defined, progressive sequence.

- Phonics is taught daily in Reception, Year 1 and the beginning of Year 2.
- Lessons build cumulatively on prior learning
- Children are taught to blend sounds to read words and segment sounds to spell
- Reading books are closely matched to children's phonics knowledge

Phonics learning is reinforced throughout the school day and across the wider curriculum through shared reading and writing. Alongside decoding, there is a strong focus on fluency, prosody and comprehension, as well as the development of oral language and vocabulary.

Impact

As a result of our systematic approach to phonics:

- Children develop secure decoding skills and can tackle unfamiliar words with confidence
- Children read with increasing fluency, accuracy and expression
- Gaps in learning are identified early and addressed promptly
- Children are well prepared for the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and for reading across the curriculum.

Working in Partnership with Parents

- We value the role of parents in supporting early reading and encourage involvement through phonics information evenings and guidance on how to support reading at home.



How we teach Phonics

In Reception and Year 1, phonics is taught through the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme. Phonics teaching is systematic, synthetic and taught daily, with a weekly review session built in to ensure consolidation of learning.

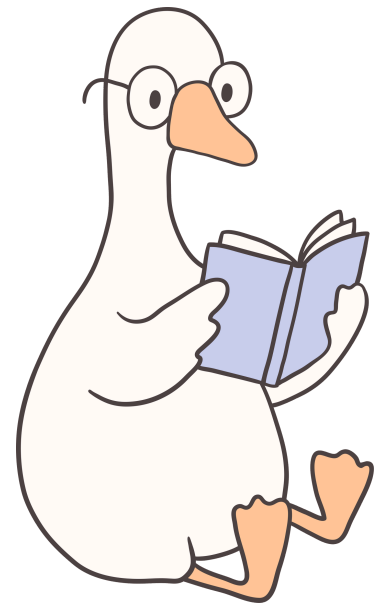
Phonics begins around week 2 of Reception, allowing children to settle into routines before starting the programme. Teaching follows the progression set out in Little Wandle, ensuring fidelity to the scheme.

- By the end of Reception, pupils are taught to the end of Phase 4.
- By the end of Year 1, pupils are taught to the end of Phase 5.

In Reception, phonics sessions initially last 10 minutes, supported by daily additional oral blending practice. Session length increases progressively to 30 minutes as soon as pupils are ready. In Year 1, phonics sessions are 30 minutes in length.

In Year 2, daily phonics teaching is provided at the beginning of the year and where appropriate. This follows the Little Wandle model and is informed by ongoing assessment to address identified gaps. During the first term of Year 2, children revisit Phase 5 to ensure they are fully confident in their phonics knowledge.

Pupils who are working below age-related expectations receive targeted 'keep-up' sessions. These follow the Little Wandle keep-up model and are short, focused sessions (approximately 10 minutes) delivered at least four times a week. Keep-up sessions are closely matched to pupils' needs and are designed to rapidly address specific gaps in reading and writing, enabling pupils to keep up with the main phonics programme.



Reading Practice Sessions

- Children in Reception and Year 1 apply their phonics knowledge by reading a fully matched decodable book in a small-group reading practice session. These sessions enable children to practise decoding, build fluency and develop confidence as readers.
- Children in Year 2 who require continued phonics support also take part in reading practice sessions. This provision is informed by ongoing assessment to ensure it meets pupils' individual needs.

Reading practice sessions:

- last 15 minutes
- take place three times a week
- are taught in small groups of approximately six children
- All sessions follow the structure and teaching model of Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, ensuring consistency and progression across year groups.
- In Reception, reading practice sessions begin in week 4, once children have been taught sufficient phonemes to begin decoding. Children who are not yet ready to decode take part in additional oral blending sessions, following the Little Wandle model, to ensure they develop the foundations needed to access reading practice as soon as possible.



How do we assess phonic knowledge?

In Reception and Year 1, learning is consolidated through a weekly review session at the end of each week, allowing children to revisit and secure key phonics knowledge. In addition, planned review weeks take place every six weeks. These include both pre-planned content and bespoke review weeks, designed to address gaps identified through the class teacher's ongoing formative assessment.

Children in Reception and Year 1 who are identified as being at risk of falling behind are quickly supported through daily 'keep-up' sessions. These sessions follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme and are carefully matched to each child's specific needs.

Children in Reception and Year 1 are formally assessed at the end of each half term using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessment tracker. Assessment outcomes are used to inform teaching, identify gaps and plan targeted support.

In Year 1, children take the Phonics Screening Check in the summer term. Any child who does not meet the expected standard is given continued targeted support and will re-sit the check in Year 2.

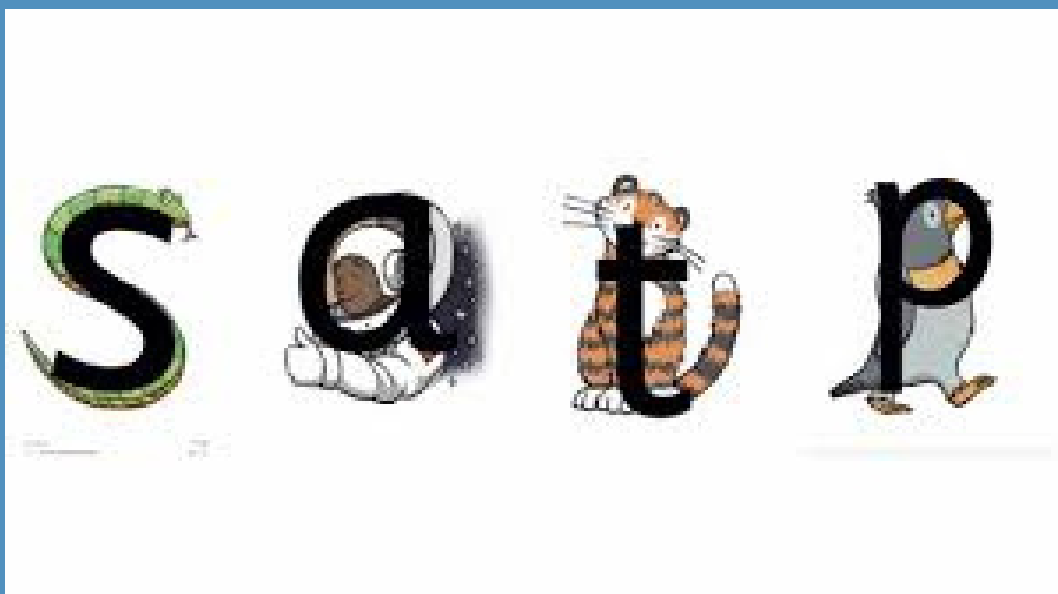
In Year 2, children who require 'catch-up' phonics support are identified through a combination of ongoing formative assessment and half-termly summative assessments. Provision is adapted accordingly to ensure gaps are addressed and pupils are supported to become confident, fluent readers.

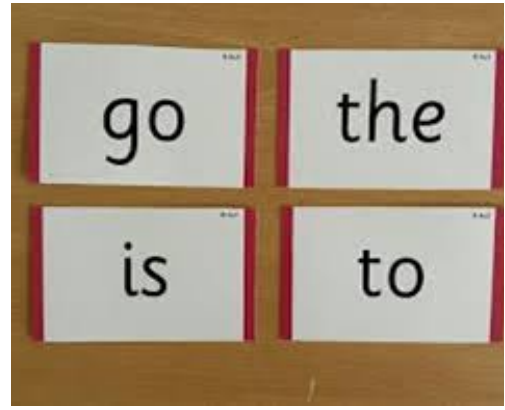


A guide to how children are taught to say sounds

Below is a link to the parent section of the Little Wandle website. This page gives clear guidance on how Little Wandle is taught in school. It includes short videos showing how to pronounce each sound correctly, as well as downloadable guides that explain how to say the sounds and how each letter is formed. There is also a helpful guide to capital letters, plus a section with nursery rhyme videos for children to enjoy at home.

<https://www.littlewandle.org.uk/resources/for-parents/#tabnametabSupportForPhonics>





How children are taught tricky words

'Tricky words' are words that cannot easily be decoded ('sounded out' and read). This is because some of the sounds in the words are spelt in an unusual way. It is important for children to be able to read these words as they are among the most common words in English. Children will practise the tricky words in school until they can read them automatically. They will also practise reading the tricky words in the decodable books that they bring home.



Terminology

Phoneme

Definition: The smallest unit of sound in a word.

Example: The word "cat" has three phonemes: /c/ /a/ /t/. Each sound is a building block of the word.

Grapheme

Definition: A letter or group of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in writing.

Example: The /f/ sound can be written as "f" (fun) or "ph" (phone). Both are graphemes for the same sound.

Decode

Definition: The process of reading a word by connecting the letters (graphemes) to their sounds (phonemes).

Example: A child decoding the word "dog" says the sounds /d/ /o/ /g/ and blends them to read the word.

Digraph

Definition: Two letters that work together to make one sound.

Example: "sh" in "ship" or "ch" in "chip" are digraphs.

Schwa

Definition: A very soft, quick, neutral vowel sound often heard in unstressed syllables.

Example: The first syllable of "about" sounds like "uh" — that's a schwa.



Books coming home



Supporting Your Child with Reading

Regular reading at home helps your child build confidence, reinforce school learning, and develop a love of reading.

Reading Practice Book

- Matched to your child's phonics level; they should read it mostly independently.
- It may feel easy—this helps them develop fluency, confidence, and expression.

How to help:

- Listen to them read aloud and give plenty of praise
- If they struggle with a word, tell them so reading stays smooth
- Talk about the book together to support understanding

Library Book

- Chosen by your child for enjoyment; not matched to their phonics level.
- How to help:
 - Read together or read to your child
 - Discuss the story and pictures, predict what happens next
 - Use different voices and explore facts in non-fiction books

Most importantly, reading should be relaxed, enjoyable, and shared—helping your child see reading as fun and supporting long-term success.

