St Barnabas CE Primary School

"Preparing for a positive future, achieved through faith."
Christian values are central to the life of our school, where we are devoted to inspire our children to succeed, flourish and live life in all its fullness.
"Let your light shine."
Matthew 5:16

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Policy Updated:	September 2025
Date reviewed and agreed by Governors:	December 2025
Date of next review:	September 2026
Headteacher:	Miss J Hodgkinson
Chair of Governors:	Dr C Kressel

Rationale

At St Barnabas CE Primary School, we are passionate about reading. Our aim is that our Reading curriculum ensures our children reach their full potential and that by the time they leave us, they are able to read confidently for meaning, regularly enjoy reading for pleasure and confidently communicate effectively. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At St Barnabas CE Primary School, 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 and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Nursery with the Foundations programme and from Reception follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* progression, 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 Barnabas CE Primary School, 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 Barnabas CE Primary School, 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.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Reading Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at 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.

Foundations in Nursery

- We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:
    - sharing high-quality stories and poems
    - learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
    - activities that develop focused listening and attention, including tuning into sounds and oral blending
    - attention to high-quality language.
- We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.
- We deliver the Love of Reading programme through high-quality texts, developing a love of reading and immersing our children in language.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for up to 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- 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:
    - 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.
    - Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice in Reception and Year 1 has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. Keep-up lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning.

Rapid Catch-up

Every child in Year 2 or above who cannot read at age-related expectations receives targeted support so that they can access the curriculum and enjoy reading as soon as possible. Trained staff deliver the Little Wandle Rapid Catch-up programme that mirrors the main phonics programme but has a faster pace. It enables children to catch up quickly. Children are assessed using the Rapid Catch-up phonics assessment and fluency assessment, gaps

are identified, and a robust programme is put in place to ensure they learn to read quickly. The results of the initial Rapid Catch-up assessment will determine the correct pathway through the programme for each child. The assessments also help us to match children to the appropriate reading book.

SEND programme

At St Barnabas CE Primary School, we deliver the Little Wandle SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) programme. It is a complete programme that mirrors the main Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised phonics programme but with adaptations and support in place that make it possible for our school to meet the needs of all our learners. It has been created to help children learn to read using the right level of challenge for each child and using the graduated approach if needed.

Teaching reading:

Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:
    - are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six or less children
    - use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of 'Application of phonics to reading'
    - 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:
    - decoding
    - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
    - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.
- In Reception these sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.
- We continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

Fluency

At St Barnabas CE Primary School, we want all children to have the secure phonic knowledge needed to be able to read. But being a fluent reader is so much more. We ensure teaching reading is our priority so that every child can unlock all aspects of reading. Little Wandle Fluency teaches all aspects of reading using vibrant, diverse and engaging chapter books created by contemporary authors and illustrators. Each book has been carefully devised to support children as they progress in reading fluency through Years 2, 3 and beyond; making sure every child can become a confident, fluent and motivated reader.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book explored in class, is shared online with home to ensure success is shared with the family.
- Children are provided with an additional decodable book.
- Home engagement is monitored weekly and additional reading opportunities are provided for those not reading at home.
- Reading for pleasure books also go home weekly for parents to share and read to children.
- 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 who are receiving additional phonics Keep up sessions have additional reads on a one-to-one basis.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every member of teaching staff 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 the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and 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 value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at **St Barnabas CE Primary School** 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 EYFS and KS1, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and the adults will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school.
- As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (book fairs, author visits and workshops, book clubs, national events and visits to the local bookshop).
- Children have the opportunity to be reading role models and take on the role as Reading Ambassador for their year group.
- The Reading Retreat and The Book Nook are made available for classes to use.

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

- **Assessment for learning** is used:
  - daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support
  - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessment** is used:
  - every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
  - by SLT and scrutinised through the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* online assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
  - in Year 1, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Years 2 to 6, when they are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
  - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. For Year 1 children, this is when they read the final fluency assessment at 60–70+ words per minute. Older children can exit the Rapid Catch-up programme when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at age-related expectations. After exiting their programme, children do not need to ready any more fully decodable books.
- A **placement assessment** is used:
  - with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

- The **Rapid Catch-up assessment** is used:
  - with any child new to the school in Year 2 and above to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

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