



South Norwood Primary School

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Revised: January 2023

To be reviewed: January 2026

Our purpose is to ensure that South Norwood pupils enjoy their education, as they strive towards challenging targets and high standards. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Intent

Phonics (Reading and Spelling)

At South Norwood Primary School, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. We teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds, which is a complete systematic and synthetic phonics programme validated by the Department for Education.

We start teaching phonics in Reception and follow a detailed programme of 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 equipped with the skills to be able to tackle new and unfamiliar words as they read. Teaching staff model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing and across the curriculum. As speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects, we have a strong focus on language development for our children.

Comprehension

At South Norwood Primary School, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time they leave us, our aim is for all children to read confidently for meaning and be equipped with the tools they need to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose and we aim to promote a love of reading from the moment children join us.

We strongly believe in the importance of teaching every child to read and our highly-skilled Phonics Leader drives the early reading programme in our school. They regularly monitor provide support to our reading team, so that teaching is continuously of a high standard and fidelity to the Little Wandle programme is maintained.

Implementation (How we teach phonics and early reading)

Foundations for phonics 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 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.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics lessons every day in Reception and Year 1. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. In order for children to make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.

We follow the Little Wandle 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 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.

We timetable daily phonics lessons for children in Year 2 and beyond, who are not fully fluent at reading. We recognise these children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the Little Wandle assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Little Wandle resources – at pace.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions

In Reception and Year 1, we teach children to read through reading practice sessions. These are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children. We use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge. 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, we aim for the children to begin Reading Practise sessions as soon as possible. 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 from Year 2 and beyond until they become fluent readers.

Home reading

We send decodable reading practice books each week to ensure success is shared with the family at home. Reading for pleasure books also go home 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

Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics *Keep-up* sessions read their reading practice book to an adult daily.

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 and outcomes for our pupils. In order to ensure a consistent approach to teaching, teachers;

- Use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.
- Use weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.

The Phonics Leader and SLT regularly monitor and observe teaching and together with the class teachers, use the summative data to identify children who need additional support.

Embedding a love of reading: 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).

At South Norwood Primary School, 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, using carefully chosen books. We want children to experience a wide range of texts, including books that reflect the children at our 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 Nursery/Reception, 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. Parents/ carers are encouraged to record comments to share with the adults in school relating to their child's reading. Teachers will regularly check these to ensure children are reading at least 3 times per week, and record a comment relating to the child's reading progress in 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.

The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. Throughout the year, opportunities for children to engage with a wide range of 'Reading for Pleasure' events are planned such as book fairs, author visits and workshops, and national events such as World Book Day.

Impact

Teachers use assessments to monitor progress and to identify any child requiring 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 requiring additional support and to plan the *Keep-up* support that they need.

Statutory assessment

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

Assessing children new to joining the school

A *Placement assessment* is used with any child new to the school in Reception and Year 1 and *Rapid Catch-up* assessment for children in Year 2 and above, to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Ongoing assessment for *Rapid Catch-up* in Years 2 to 6

Children in Year 2 to 6 whom are accessing the *Rapid Catch-up* programme, are assessed through:

- an initial assessment to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan appropriate teaching
- summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching
- fluency assessments

The fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short, one-minute assessments. They also assess when children are ready to exit the *Rapid Catch-up* programme, which is when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute.