



St Faith's

Church of England
Infant and Nursery School

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

"Our inclusive St Faith's family strives to enable all to achieve their full potential and inspire a community of hope and friendship. We seek excellence by ensuring a safe, respectful and flourishing learning community, where differences are celebrated and our genuine love and high expectations make a difference to all."

Oscar Romero "Aspire not to have more, but to be more."

As a Church School, the distinctive Christian values of respect, compassion, trust, justice, friendship and community are promoted through the experiences we offer to all our children, to give them the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to lead confident, healthy and independent lives. We promote the teaching and understanding of fundamental British values to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. We positively teach the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith. Teaching the fundamental British values helps the children to become informed, active and responsible citizens.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the **Phonics and Reading Policy** in our school. It reflects the consensus of opinion of all members of staff. It is based on current practice and has the full agreement of the governing body. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Head teacher, teaching staff and support staff. It is our collective responsibility to raise awareness, and that all policies are known, understood and used in an appropriate way. Our families have been consulted, and our policy reflects their comments and opinions.

Introduction

At St Faith's Church of England Infant and Nursery School, we believe that every child has the right to succeed in reading, regardless of ability, background and needs. We believe that reading is the core "gateway to learning" and a fundamental life skill for everyone. It is prioritised with our curriculum and the teaching of reading in our school is rigorous and consistent. We believe that all children can and will learn to read whilst they are with us. Ultimately, we want children to become confident and effective readers whilst establishing their own lifelong love and enjoyment of reading.

Early reading in Early Years (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) is a structured, daily approach to teaching children to read, primarily through systematic synthetic phonics Little Wandle. It focuses on decoding words, developing fluency, and fostering a love for reading through matched books, storytelling, and comprehension activities from Nursery to Year 2.

Foundational Knowledge

We recognise that Early Reading and Phonics as a major component of Foundational Knowledge.

At St Faith's the teaching and learning of Foundational Knowledge is paramount in all that we do. We aim for all children to leave our school with the key foundations for learning in place as they progress further along their learning journey.

The research report 'Strong foundations in the first years of school' published by Ofsted (October 2024) emphasised how children need to secure strong Foundational Knowledge across Reception and KS1 to give them the best chance of educational success. Our aims and objectives for all areas of foundational knowledge are set out clearly in our Foundational Knowledge policy.

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At St Faith's Church of England Infant and Nursery 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/Reception and 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 can tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At St Faith's Church of England Infant and Nursery 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 Faith's Church of England Infant and Nursery 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 and phonics Leader who both drive the early reading programme in our school. They are highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our teaching and support staff, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Phonics across the Year Groups

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 for 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 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, including a rapid catch-up programme, for any child in Year 2 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics screening check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.
- Teacher establishes a reading priority group for each class who are heard read individually and more frequently.

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 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 a fully trained adult, 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.
- In Year 2, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.
- When the children in Year 2 are ready to progress, they will use a whole class approach.
- Nursery children take part in shared reading sessions which are done in their key groups. The focus of these groups is comprehension, vocabulary and rich book talk.

Home reading and parental engagement

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home in most cases to ensure success is shared with the family.
 - Reading for pleasure books also go home in most cases for parents to share and read to children. The children choose these themselves from the library.
 - All children 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.
 - 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.
 - We hold an early reading and phonics meeting twice a year which is aimed at Reception and Year 1 parents and a Year 2 reading and SATs talk. Information and handouts from these are added to the website.

Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception Year 1 and Year 2 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book to an adult daily. This is reviewed regularly and all achievements are celebrated.

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. 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.
- Monitoring by the Phonics Lead and Reading Lead ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- Progress and attainment meetings take place termly. Reading progress and planning next steps is key to this process.
- The Reading Leader and SLT use our St Faith's non negotiables document 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 in read aloud time. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at St Faith's Church of England Infant and Nursery School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures. These books are planned for in each year group and are on our Long-Term Plan.
- Every classroom has a 'Reading Nook' that encourages a love for reading. They are inviting and cosy spaces for the children to share a book. The selection of books available are limited and changed when appropriate. Each 'Reading Nook' has recommended and celebrated books.
- In Nursery/Reception, children have access to the 'Reading Nook' every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Each week, two classes are surprised with the class story chests that appear in their rooms. These are designed to excite and engage the children and to encourage them to respond with each other about the text inside.
- As we are extremely fortunate with our outstanding library space, we utilise it the best we can. Each class has a weekly timetabled slot in the library. The space is used for reading practice sessions, quiet reading and intervention. Staff recommended reads are on display and we have a celebrated author each term with a selection of books for the children to explore. Year 1 choose library monitors to ensure we are being respectful of the library and to keep it clean and tidy.
- Each class has regular access to the school library every week.
- Reception children take home a story bag linked to their topic. It includes a book, a list of activities ideas and puppets.
- Year one children have a weekly story telling session which are progressive throughout the year. They provide opportunities for children to listen to stories, learn new stories, compose stories together and then tell their own stories.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events including World Book Day and National Poetry Day. We involve and encourage parents as much as possible during these events. We also take part in special author events and engage with other schools.
- We are working as part of the Lincolnshire Reading Pledge group and develop teachers as readers.

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.
 - During reading practise sessions
- [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. A heat map is used to identify these individual children.
 - by SLT and scrutinised through the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- The [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised placement assessment](#) is used:
 - with any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan 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.

Ongoing assessment for catch-up

- Children in Year 2 are assessed through:
 - their teacher's ongoing formative assessment
 - the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds* placement assessment
 - the appropriate half-termly assessments

Written with the English Governor on:	September 2026
Signed (governor):	Emile Van de Zee
Signed (subject leaders):	Helen Gill and Lisa Kingston
Review date	September 2027