



Phonics and Early Reading Policy

November 2025

Scope of this policy

This policy reflects practice for Pre-school to Year 2. It should be read alongside our Reading policy.

At Chawson First School 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 Chawson First School, we believe that all children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach early reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching Little Wandle Foundations in our Pre-school and then, from Reception, we 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 Chawson First 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 and oracy skills for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Comprehension

At Chawson First School we value reading as a crucial life skill. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose, providing them with the tools that they need to read confidently for meaning and to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary.

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 responsible for the implementation of phonics and early reading across the school and they also monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Pre-school

- 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 Pre-school children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.
- Little Wandle Foundations is aligned to the non-statutory guidance on Development Matters as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. We use it as part of our wider provision for Communication and Language, and Literacy. It supports children to:
 - develop their phonological awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllables, initial and voice sounds, and oral blending
 - love stories and rhymes, and learn by heart a bank of familiar favourites
 - increase their vocabulary and confidence to talk
 - improve their listening and ability to take part in back-and-forth conversations.

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.
- The teaching of phonics 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.
- Repeated practice is built into classroom routines
- A daily phonics blast lesson is used in Year 1 to ensure all children keep pace with Phase 5 content.

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.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

- Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed. Corresponding summative assessments are carried out to ensure this content is secure.
- Once all Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.
- We use the Phase 5 review assessment before teaching in Year 2 to identify any children who may need more support when teaching. We reassess after teaching the Phase 5 review.
- Once the Phase 5 review is secure, we teach the Bridge to spelling before moving to the Spelling units.
- Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers have daily phonics teaching and follow the Rapid Catch-up programme.

Children in Year 2 to Year 4: Rapid Catch-up

- We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 and above who is not at age-related expectations for 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.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15 to 20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.
- We assess children who are new to our school, new to the country or new to English using the Rapid Catch-up assessments to quickly identify their needs.

- We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge and teach these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- We assess children every four weeks using the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These sessions 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 using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments and book matching grids.
- 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 of the Autumn term. 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.

Home reading & Parental Engagement

We place high value on partnership with families. To support engagement at home, we use Boom Reader to monitor reading frequency and pupil engagement. Children take home their fully decodable reading practice book so that the decoding success experienced in school can be confidently replicated at home. In addition, reading-for-pleasure books are sent home for parents to read aloud and share together.

We regularly share Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised home resources and video guidance with families to build confidence in supporting phonics, to explain new GPCs, and to model the blending process. Reception parents receive access to our Phonics Instagram page, which introduces new GPCs as they are taught in school. Parents are also invited to a series of workshops across the Reception year (including an Autumn term Early Reading & Phonics workshop) which focus on: the purpose of worded / matched books, how blending is taught, and the role of shared reading.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every member of staff who will deliver phonics in our school has been trained to teach reading. 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 regularly monitors and observes teaching and uses summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

We value reading for pleasure highly and we are committed to intentionally developing our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy. We read to children every day. Texts are selected carefully to expose pupils to a broad and diverse reading diet: books that reflect our children and community, as well as books that offer windows into other worlds, perspectives and cultures. Every class in school has a reading corner that aligns with the expectations of the Reading Framework. Reading corners are accessible to pupils throughout choosing time, and the collections are frequently refreshed so children encounter new texts regularly. We promote pupil ownership of reading through pupil librarians in Key Stage 2. Pupil librarians meet regularly with the Reading Leader and take responsibility for aspects of reading promotion across the school. We also run regular “Teacher as Reader” assemblies and staff book-sharing moments, where staff model their own authentic reader identity and introduce texts they themselves value and love. In addition, there are book clubs available, which aim to further promote reading for pleasure and support children to sustain reading behaviours over time. We run monthly whole-school reading themes and events which further drive engagement in reading for pleasure (e.g. Non-fiction November).

Impact

Assessment

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

- Assessment for Learning (AfL) is used:
 - daily within class to identify children who require Daily Keep-up support, as well as words and GPCs that need additional teaching
 - to plan repeated practice throughout the day to ensure all children secure learning
 - weekly in the Friday review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- Summative assessments are uploaded onto the Assessment tracker for Reception and Year 1. These are used:
 - to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups
 - by teachers, Reading Leaders and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level
 - by SLT to scrutinise and plan how to narrow the attainment gaps between different groups of children and to put in place any additional support for teachers.

We assess:

- every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be reviewed or retaught

- to establish if learning is secure for more than 70% of children before new content is taught
- to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Daily Keep-up support that they need.
- Every three weeks, we reassess every child who is not on track.
- Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - in Year 1 and Year 2, 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 4, when they are reading the Phase 5 Set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme.
- 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 to plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Reception are assessed against the Early Learning Goals in word reading and comprehension.
- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.