

# Phonics and Reading Policy

January 2025

## Hollyfield Primary School

...a place where everyone matters



**Version:**

January 2025

**Ratified by the Governing Body:**

**Signed by the Governing Body:**

**To be reviewed (annually):**

January 2026

This policy should also be read alongside the National Curriculum (2014) and other documents from the Standards and Testing Agency. It should also be read in conjunction with the Hollyfield English and Writing Policies.

## **Intent**

Hollyfield Primary School is determined that every child will learn to read, regardless of background, needs or abilities. We want our children to be fluent, confident readers. We will share with our pupils a wealth of texts including stories, rhymes, poems and non-fiction to develop their vocabulary, language comprehension, and develop a genuine love of reading and a keen interest in a range of texts. We work to inspire our children to become life-long readers, who enjoy books and have a desire to read for pleasure.

We want every child to read widely, and to gain a rich knowledge across the curriculum. By offering a wide range of texts, we aim to broaden their minds and experiences to allow them to empathise with the world in which they live and support the development of their cultural capital. Reading is such an important life skill that it is imperative that we enable them to become independent readers so they are able to engage in all learning and are well prepared for their next stage of their education and life.

## **Phonics**

At Hollyfield 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 from the first full week in 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 are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Hollyfield 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.

## **Fluency and comprehension**

In order to ensure pupils leave Hollyfield as fluent readers, children continue their reading journey by progressing on to the fluency books, once they exit the phonics programme. This ensures that pupils are able to go beyond decoding and have specific, carefully planned opportunities to continue to develop their fluency and so their comprehension. We recognise that development of vocabulary and breadth of background knowledge also supports these key skills and so our carefully chosen resources provide continuous, rich opportunities to do so.

At Hollyfield 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.

## **Implementation**

### **Daily phonics lessons in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2**

We teach early reading through the systematic, synthetic phonics programme Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. The phonic programme exceeds the expectations of the National Curriculum and Early Learning Goals with clearly defined expectations set out term by term.

- 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 week, we also review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in the first full week 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.
  - Children in Year 2 complete a revision unit focussed on the more complex phase 5 graphemes from the programme to ensure that these are embedded well. This is taught in the first half of the autumn term.
- Lessons follow the format of:
  - Recall and review – short pacy review of prior learning
  - Teach – introduction of new learning with strong teacher modelling
  - Practise and apply – children practice and apply the learning
  - Review of key learning – reinforcement of the key learning and addressing any misconceptions identified during the lesson
  - Apply to reading – children then apply their phonic skill to reading fully decodable books matched to their reading ability.

### **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 regular phonics sessions for any child in Year 2 or above who has not left the programme. 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.
- For those children in Year 3-6 who need to develop their reading fluency further, they follow the 3-day reading practice timetable as outlined below in addition to these 'keep-up' sessions. We also provide additional opportunities to develop fluency for example, by using the research-informed practice of echo reading with their peers.
- Resources to deliver Keep-up have been provided to enable staff to do this swiftly.
- For pupils who are receiving 'catch-up' (those who are working behind their peers), resources are stored centrally to enable staff to quickly source the resources they require to deliver effective 'catch-up' sessions.

### **Teaching reading**

#### **Reception and Year 1**

- We teach the application of phonic knowledge through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:
  - are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of up to eight children.
  - use fully decodable books aligned to the Little Wandle phonics progression, matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and teachers' professional judgement.

- 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 and fluency
  - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
  - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.
- In Reception these sessions start in 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.

### **Years 2, 3 and 4**

- In Year 2 and beyond, we continue to teach reading as outlined above for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.
- Children have four reading practice sessions a week.
- For those who have been assessed as ready to exit the programme, they progress on to the Fluency programme and have two adult-led reading practice sessions a week within their four sessions. These:
  - are taught by a fully trained adult in groups of up to ten and then up to larger groups of fifteen (usually in Year 4).
  - use books matched to children's fluency rates.
  - are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.
- Each adult-led reading practice session is based on a specific section/ chapter of the book. Sessions include:
  - decoding of key vocabulary
  - discussion around the vocabulary being used within the section/ chapter
  - further GPC knowledge development (Fluency 1-5)
  - opportunities for prosody and fluency development through modelling and rehearsal
  - comprehension of what has been read through a dialogic talk approach

### **Years 4, 5 and 6**

- As children complete and exit the fluency programme (typically in Year 4), children progress to reading from a range of carefully curated texts. Children have reading practice four times a week, with at least one session a week being adult-led. These sessions:
  - are taught by a fully trained adult in groups typically ranging from ten to fifteen pupils.
  - use carefully selected texts from a range of genres and themes.
  - are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.
- Each adult-led reading practice session is based on a specific section/ chapter of the book. Sessions include:
  - decoding of key vocabulary, if required
  - discussion around the vocabulary being used within the section/ chapter
  - opportunities to further develop fluency through rehearsal and repeated reading
  - comprehension of what has been read through a range of approaches including use of the dialogic talk approach

### **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.

- In phonics, weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.
- In phonics, 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 monitor and observe teaching. They also use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and any gaps in learning.
- A clear outline of progression which includes recommended stage and fluency for each term/year group is shared with staff so that all are ambitious and able to swiftly identify any needs for additional support.

## **Comprehension**

Within the curriculum, including English, we provide further opportunities for reading comprehension to be developed. The reading practice sessions, as outlined above already provide, at least weekly, sessions in which comprehension skills are developed. The development of comprehension skills is done in a number of ways and across the curriculum as we recognise that pupils' comprehension skills are improved when they are able to decode fluently; read with prosody; develop their vocabulary and improve their background knowledge.

## **APE – Answer, Prove, Explain**

When focussing specifically on reading comprehension, we use texts appropriate for the year group with cross-curricular links where appropriate, provided that the text is of a high quality. To support the development of comprehension skills we use the APE (Answer, Prove, Explain) technique during both whole class sessions and reading practice sessions. This method is embedded throughout the school and is drawn upon across the curriculum. Every classroom has a prompt on display to support the children develop these skills.

## **Read aloud**

At least four times a week, in every class, an adult reads aloud to the children. We have created a core reading spine which includes 'class reads' for each term. These have been carefully selected ensuring there is progression, diversity in authors, genres and representation, as well as being books that will help children to develop a love of reading. These books are frequently above the level that the children can access independently and this helps to expose them to more ambitious vocabulary and text types. Children are supported to read resistant texts or those with non-linear plots. Having one book per term stipulated allows room for staff and pupils to also make selections of what they would love to choose next to read as a class. This further encourages rich book talk, the sharing of recommendations and provides further opportunities for staff and pupils to get to know each other as readers.

## **Reading Across the Curriculum**

Reading is promoted and developed across the curriculum and specific vocabulary is explicitly shared with the children within each unit of work. This supports their development of wider background knowledge, as well as their understanding of these key words. Vocabulary is discussed and shared explicitly and then displayed via working walls so that children are able to refer back to it as needed. Vocabulary is dual coded, where appropriate, to support pupils in deepening their understanding of the word.

Techniques, such as choral reading are also used across a range of lessons, especially when children are reading information related to their topic/lesson. Staff have had specific training in these techniques and are aware that these are research-informed practices shown to improve reading fluency and therefore comprehension.

## Home reading

### Reading Practice Books

- For children who are reading the decodable, phonics-based reading practice books, these are taken home weekly to ensure success and progress is shared with the family.
- For children who are reading the fluency books, these are made available on the Collins Hub once the children have finished reading it is school. This again, provides families with the opportunity to celebrate and share successes and progress in reading.
- For the children who have exited the fluency programme, dependant on the text being used, these may also be set on the Collins Hub or sent home as a physical copy.
- As part of their homework, children are expected to read at home at least three times a week.

### Reading for Pleasure Books

- These go home weekly. They are chosen by the pupils and can be changed weekly/ once they have finished reading them.
- Pupils select books based on their interests and are able to choose from the many library areas around the school in addition to the class libraries.
- For children at an earlier stage of reading, these books are likely to be shared with an adult at home and read together. More fluent readers may become more independent with their reading at home, however, parents showing an interest in what their child is reading and reading books with them is known to help foster a love of reading.
- In Reception and Year 1 we also 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 offer supporting materials via online platforms such as Class Dojo as well as in face-to-face meetings with parents. Where parents are unable to attend meetings, all materials are shared electronically.

## 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 at least four times a week. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Hollyfield Primary School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- We have a core reading spine where books have been specifically chosen to provide breadth of genre, representation and level of challenge. However, there is plenty of space within the terms for other books to be read including recommendations made by staff and pupils.
- 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 Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their continuous provision.
- Classes have the opportunity to choose a reading book for pleasure to be taken home and share with family members.



- Parents are invited in to school to share in story time sessions. Within these sessions, teachers model some of the key ways we develop a love of reading with our pupils and encourage parents to do the same at home.
- We have a number of easily accessible library areas within the school.
- Information about the year group author for the term is on display in the classroom along with a selection of their books (age appropriate). These books sometimes include books by other authors which have similar themes or styles of writing.
- Children enjoy having live online author visits every term for every year group. These bring further opportunities for children to discover new books and authors as well as gain insights into what it is like to be an author which also inspires them to write.
- Year 5 pupils spend time reading with our Reception children on a regular basis.
- We have a number of Reading Champions in Year 6, who love reading and promote reading in school through a number of initiatives, including Storytime takeover.
- We have three reading sheds, one for Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 outdoor areas. These are opened regularly by the Reading Champions and encourage pupils to read in their free time. In Key Stage 1, pupils particularly enjoy having a story read to them by the Champions during lunchtime.
- Pupils are always very excited when the Book Fair arrives and love to visit it both in school time and after school. This provides children with the opportunity to discover new books and authors they may not have known of before.
- Our year 6 pupils also visit the local library every four weeks, providing all children with the opportunity to not only browse, share and borrow from a wealth of texts but also to help foster positive relationships with the library so that children are more likely to continue using it as they move on from Hollyfield.

## Resources

For Reading Practice, we have fully decodable Little Wandle phonics books provided through Collins. Staff are able to use a pack which has a set of the texts, the required grapheme flashcards, the required word cards (including tricky words, decodable words and 'vocabulary' words) and the planning for each reading session. These are stored centrally and audited regularly.

When pupils progress on to the Little Wandle fluency books, staff are again provided with a pack which has the required word cards (including tricky words for books up phase 5, focus words and 'vocabulary' words), the set of texts and the planning for each session.

When pupils progress on to the wider texts. Teachers make sure that resources are ready to support the delivery of the sessions, e.g. copies of the text, white boards, vocabulary, supporting activities.

## Library areas

Hollyfield benefits from many library areas. This enables to have easy and frequent access to a wealth of rich and diverse reading material. These are frequently accessed within reading practice sessions (non-teach-led sessions) as well as during moments throughout the day such as transition times, lunch and break times. These areas have books organised by genres and texts are selected to be in areas that are most suited to the age groups that access them. Having numerous library areas, including smaller library trolleys, and the reading sheds on the playgrounds means pupils are regularly seeing books and being enticed by the many forward-facing interesting looking books.

New additions and releases are often added to the library areas. Where genres are especially popular, we aim to purchase more books of this type but also talk to children and recommend other similar genres, authors, writing styles or themes they may also enjoy. This helps them to discover new authors, genres and books.

## **Class Libraries**

Each class library has a selection of fiction and non-fiction books, which are used by the children in school as well as their reading for pleasure books. In addition, there is a selection of age-appropriate dictionaries and thesauruses. All class libraries have labelled shelves/baskets, clearly identifying the types of material available. Library areas are attractive, with displays encouraging reading and are regularly updated with new books. Recommended books are shared and displayed.

## **Class Displays**

In every classroom there is:

- information about the year group author for the term on display
- a reading poster on the classroom door stating what the class is currently reading
- enticing, well organised reading corners created for children to enjoy reading in
- posters of staff who 'got caught reading'
- APE poster is displayed clearly for the children to refer to
- vocabulary for the current text that is being read, including dual coding

## **Staff training**

Reading is a priority in school and we want all our teachers to be expert teachers of reading. All staff, including senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have been trained in phonics, teaching early reading and how to develop children's deeper understanding of texts. New staff are trained straight away to ensure they have expert knowledge and there is a consistency throughout the school. Regular update training takes place to address any training needs identified from monitoring and to further improve practice to ensure the highest quality of teaching.

The weekly Little Wandle emails are read by the reading lead every week. These are then disseminated, where appropriate. The reading lead also ensures they remain well-informed of any changes or updates from Little Wandle including attending relevant training sessions.

## **Role of Reading Lead**

At Hollyfield we have a designated reading lead who drives the early reading programme in our school. The leader is highly skilled in teaching phonics and early reading. They are involved in the delivery of the reading practice each week as well as carrying out regular informal and formal monitoring of the teaching and learning of phonics and early reading in school. They support staff in the assessments of pupils' phonics and reading, and in identifying pupils who need additional support and what support they require. They coach staff individually, where needed, and provide regular training to ensure the staff teach the programme with fidelity and expertise.

## **Equal opportunities**

Hollyfield Primary School is committed to ensuring that it meets the specific duties in relation to current equality legislation. All children have equal access to the English curriculum, irrespective of their race, gender and ability. All children cover the content made statutory by the English Programmes of Study within the National Curriculum. Children access the curriculum at the appropriate level, thus ensuring progression and continuity. Suitable resources, including personnel, learning environments and equipment are available to enable children to access the learning required. Resources are regularly reviewed to ensure they encompass and reflect our diverse community and society.



## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

Our intention is that every child will learn to read. All SEND children will be on the same trajectory for learning to read as all other children. If there is a very specific barrier for a child, we carefully analyse the issue and consider a precise response in order to support the child to overcome this. Specific, tailored intervention and repeated practice will equip them with the key skills to enable them to read.

### **Provision for children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) includes:**

- Carefully planned activities to support children
- Breaking down the learning into smaller steps
- Pupils receive Keep-up or Catch-up, as appropriate aligned to their current stage of learning
- For phonics, we are ambitious for pupils to complete the main programme, but acknowledge that some pupils require a slower pace, with slower and more repeated steps. Where appropriate, one of the SEND pathways is followed. This is decided through consultation with the Reading Leader and SENDCo.
- Assessing against criteria on the Birmingham Literacy and Language Toolkits, creating targets to enable progress are set for the children using this for speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- Analysis of formal tests, including SATS, and writing assessments to identify targets groups
- Deployment of teaching assistants and additional adults to support targeted groups and individuals both within the classroom and in intervention groups under the guidance of the class teacher to ensure full curriculum entitlement.
- Supporting staff are involved in the planning, recording and assessment of children's reading activities and development via regular discussions with their class teacher
- Provision for specific individual reading needs identified via their learning plans or EHCP.
- Support for parents to assist in helping their children develop specific skills.
- Parents of children with Special Educational Needs are kept informed of their children's progress in reading through their learning plans and are also involved in the review process.

Through high quality first teaching, and making reasonable adjustments, we endeavour to reduce the need for intervention and catch up. For children who do not keep up in phonics, we put in place same day intervention. We know that every moment counts with regards to reading and aim to maximise the opportunities for developing reading throughout the curriculum.

## **Impact**

### **Monitoring and 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 phonics lessons to identify children needing Keep-up support
  - weekly within the teacher-led reading practice sessions (up to three times a week)
  - weekly in the phonics review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
  - Regularly within all teaching where reading and phonics are required.
  - Staff regularly update assessments of the National Curriculum objectives on Insight which is used to help inform their planning not only for the whole class, but for individuals too.

Where staff who are not the class teacher identify an area for development, or note that pupils are ready to be assessed for the next reading stage, they feed this back to the class teacher/s immediately.

- **Summative assessment** is used:
  - Reception carry out a baseline assessment in the first half term based on the reading elements of the children's language and English skills using the early learning goal assessments.

- In phonics, 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.
- For those pupils having Keep-up, assessment takes place after three weeks of Keep-up, to ensure progress is being made.
- For those on the fluency programme, fluency is formally assessed every half term using the provided fluency assessments.
- Reading comprehension assessments take place every term starting from Year 1 Summer term.
- by SLT and scrutinised using the Little Wandle assessment tracker and Insight, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for pupils and staff can be put into place.
- Any child new to the school is swiftly assessed for fluency and phonics knowledge to quickly identify any and then appropriate extra provision is given where needed.

### **Statutory assessment**

- Reading elements of the children's language and English skills are assessed in last terms of the Reception class using the early learning goal assessments.
- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.
- Year 6 pupils sit the Reading SATs papers.