

Phonics Policy

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Philosophy and Purpose

This policy reflects the school values of courage, ambition, everyone a learner and mutual respect in relation to the teaching and learning of phonics. It sets out a framework within which teachers, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Teaching Assistants (Tas) can operate, and provides guidance on planning, teaching and assessment.

This policy should be read alongside the Communication Policy, as the development of speaking and listening skills is inextricably linked to the development of phonic knowledge. By recognising that everyone is a learner and valuing individual starting points, we create a supportive environment in which children can take courageous first steps into reading and build ambition to progress.

Rationale

Phonics is the vital first step in learning to read and write. It provides children with a secure code for turning written language into speech and vice versa. However, phonics is only effective when taught within a language-rich environment where speaking and listening are promoted.

In English there are approximately 44 phonemes but only 26 letters; therefore, children must be taught how single letters and groups of letters represent these sounds and how to blend and segment them when reading and spelling. This work requires ambition to achieve mastery over complex patterns, courage to try new sounds and words, and mutual respect as staff adapt teaching sensitively to individual readiness.

Approach to Teaching Phonics at Pear Tree

At Pear Tree we use the Read Write Inc. programme to introduce and teach phonics when appropriate to each child. There is a strong emphasis in the primary department on Phase 1 phonics, focusing on listening skills and sound discrimination, which are fundamental for all learners.

Phase 1 activities are embedded throughout the day and planned by class teachers.

Children move on to Phase 2 and beyond when assessment indicates readiness. Unlike mainstream expectations, our pupils may progress at a slower pace, requiring significant repetition and overlearning.

Teachers use professional judgement and formative assessment to determine readiness and next steps.

Progress is recorded using the adapted Read Write Inc. assessment tool, or our pre-phonics assessment tool, and monitored through Evidence for Learning.

Teachers work collaboratively with HLTAs to deliver targeted phonics interventions. This teamwork models mutual respect among staff and ensures that everyone is a learner, including adults who refine practice together.

Individualised Pathways

We recognise that systematic phonics may not be appropriate for every child. Some pupils will learn to read whole words by sight rather than decode them phonetically. In these cases, the focus shifts to functional reading skills that promote independence and confidence.

Our approach honours ambition by encouraging all children to develop reading skills to the highest level possible for them and courage by allowing pupils to explore alternative strategies without fear of failure.

Creating a Language-Rich Environment

Phonics is part of a broader reading culture. Children are immersed in spoken language, stories and print across the curriculum. Opportunities to see and read words in their environment are encouraged. Staff plan activities that strengthen long-term and working memory, building the foundation for decoding and comprehension.

This inclusive environment models mutual respect by valuing each child's unique progress and celebrates everyone a learner by encouraging staff and pupils to grow together.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Ongoing assessment identifies when pupils are ready to begin or move through phases. Tools include:

- Teacher observation and informal assessments
- Annual Reviews and summative assessments
- Adapted Read Write Inc. tracking for pupils from Phase 2 onwards
- Phase 1 assessments from our pre-phonics assessment tools

Progress is recorded in Evidence for Learning and used to plan next steps. Reporting to parents includes both phonic knowledge and functional reading progress.

Our assessment approach supports ambition by recognising and celebrating progress, encourages courage when pupils attempt unfamiliar sounds and words, and reinforces mutual respect through constructive, personalised feedback.

Monitoring and Evaluating Phonics

The Literacy Leader monitors planning and delivery, supporting colleagues across Key Stags. Collaborative reflection on teaching approaches models everyone a learner among staff and mutual respect in sharing expertise. Regular review ensures provision remains ambitious and responsive to pupil need.

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