

Phonics and early reading policy

The context of our school

Wells Park School (WPS) is a Local Authority maintained primary school for children aged 5-11 years, with a designated number of 56 pupils on roll. The school is a specialist provision for pupils assessed as having Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH).

All pupils admitted to WPS have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place with SEMH noted as their primary need. In exceptional circumstances, however, a pupil may be admitted when an EHCP is still in the process of being finalised.

The culture and practice at WPS are founded on the following principles:

- The importance of establishing a sense of belonging
- Developing love for self, others and the world
- Fostering hope and aspiration
- Encouraging joyfulness in living and learning together.

These 'foundation stones' are the basis for all WPS policies. Our approach to admissions to the school is designed to ensure the best possible experience of what it means to become a part of our school community.

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 Wells Park 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 admission 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. Pupils assessed at the level of Little Wandle follow the programme regardless of chronological age, to enable them to progress as fluent readers and writers.

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. We aspire for all of our children to be able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read.

Comprehension

At Wells Park School, we value reading as it is a crucial life skill. We aspire for our learners to read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our reading sessions equip our pupils with 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

Foundations for phonics for pupils working at early stages of the pre-stage curriculum

- 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 children working at the early stages of the pre-stage curriculum are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending.

Daily phonics lessons for pupils at Pre Stage or Year one

- We teach phonics for 20 minutes a day. For pupils working at Pre Stage or Year one, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Thursday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- Children make a strong start from admission assessment: teaching begins immediately and is integrated into the classroom plans
- We follow the [*Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* expectations of progress](#):
 - Children working at the Pre-Stage curriculum 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 Band 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 any child in Band 2 or 3 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.
- Precision teaching is delivered by the class teacher or LSA to further support the consolidation of taught sounds or where repeated practice is beneficial.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions at least three times a week. These:
 - are taught by a fully trained adult on a 1:1 basis
 - 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 the class teacher, who assesses pupils half termly using our different assessment schemes (Teacher assessment, 2Eskimos, Phonics assessment, Lexia and Reading comprehension formative papers)
- 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.
- Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.
- For pupils at Band 2 or Band 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home to encourage success is shared with the family.
 - 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.

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.
- 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 use the Audit and Prompt cards 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. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Wells Park 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.
- Each classroom is equipped with the resources for Little Wandle.
- All Children have a home-school 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.
- 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.
- We aspire for each class visits the local library every half term.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at throughout the school day. Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (book fairs, author visits and workshops, national events etc).

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](#) 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 needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
 - 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

- For pupils in Year 1 chronologically to the National Curriculum, they will sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Ongoing assessment for catch-up

- Children are assessed through:
 - their teacher's ongoing formative assessment
 - the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds* placement assessment
 - the appropriate half-termly assessments.
 - 2Eskimos
 - Formative reading comprehension assessment papers

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