

Speen Church of England School



Phonics Policy

Issued: September 2026

Next Review: September 2028

THEN CHRIST WILL MAKE HIS HOME IN YOUR HEARTS
AS YOU TRUST IN HIM. YOUR ROOTS WILL GROW
DOWN INTO GOD'S LOVE AND KEEP YOU STRONG.

—EPHESIANS 3:17 (NLT)

School Vision Statement

At Speen Church of England School, we believe it is vitally important that children develop a secure understanding of the letter sounds and spelling system of English. Phonic skills are taught through a systematic, staged approach that helps every child to 'achieve their potential'. Teachers deliver engaging, interactive phonics sessions that involve all children in this area of learning, underpinned by our school's Christian values of nurturing every child to flourish.

Statutory Framework and DfE Guidance

This policy has been written with reference to the following statutory and non-statutory guidance, and is reviewed whenever the Department for Education (DfE) updates its recommendations:

- The Reading Framework: teaching the foundations of literacy (DfE, updated 2023) — the Department's core guidance on teaching early reading and phonics.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework — setting the standards for Communication and Language, and Literacy, that all early years providers must meet.
- The National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study (Key Stages 1 and 2).
- Choosing a phonics teaching programme (DfE) and the DfE's published list of validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programmes.
- The statutory Phonics Screening Check assessment framework and administration guidance (Standards and Testing Agency).
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, to ensure phonics provision is adaptive and inclusive.

DfE fidelity requirement

The DfE requires schools to teach phonics with fidelity to a single, DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme, delivered with consistency across all classes. Speen Church of England School has chosen Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which appears on the DfE's list of validated programmes, as its whole-school SSP programme.

Intent

- To provide a structured and systematic approach to the learning and teaching of phonics, in line with DfE guidance.
- To enable children to become fluent and confident readers with strong phonemic and phonological awareness.
- To ensure every child, regardless of background or starting point, learns to read quickly and well, closing the word-reading gap as early as possible.
- To develop a lifelong love of reading in all pupils.
- To adapt phonics teaching to the needs of pupils, including those with SEND and those speaking English as an additional language, so that all pupils are given sufficient challenge and support to succeed.

Our Chosen Programme: Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised

At Speen Church of England School we teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, a systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme that appears on the DfE's list of validated programmes. All staff who teach phonics and reading practice sessions are trained in the delivery of this programme, and training is refreshed regularly to ensure consistency and fidelity.

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. Phonics is taught for at least 30 minutes a day, in line with DfE recommendations for a dedicated, discrete daily phonics session.

Preschool

In Preschool we provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences that meet the curriculum expectations for Communication and Language, and Literacy, within the EYFS Statutory Framework. These include:

- sharing high-quality stories, non-fiction and poems every day;
- learning a wide range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes;
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending and attention to high-quality spoken language.

This ensures Preschool children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending when they enter Reception, as recommended in the Reading Framework.

Reception

- Lessons build from 10-minute sessions, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible.
- Each Friday, we review the week's teaching (a 'Review' lesson) to help children become fluent readers and to address any gaps before they widen.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: discrete phonics teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term, in line with DfE expectations that teaching starts as soon as possible.

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.

Reading Practice Sessions

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions held up to three times a week. In line with DfE guidance, these sessions:

- are taught by a fully trained adult, to small groups of four to six children with similar reading ability;

- use books matched closely to each child's secure phonic knowledge, using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments and book-matching guidance in 'Application of phonics to reading' (pages 11–20);
- are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis to quality-assure delivery.

Each reading practice session has a single, clear focus so that the cognitive demands of the session do not overload children's working memory. Sessions are designed around three key reading skills, as set out in the Reading Framework:

- decoding — applying phonic knowledge to read unfamiliar words;
- prosody — reading with understanding, fluency and expression;
- comprehension — understanding the meaning of the text.
- In Reception, reading practice sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding receive 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 fully decodable books.

Additional (Keep-Up) Support

In line with the DfE's 'keep up, not catch up' principle, any child identified as falling behind the expected pace of progress receives timely additional support that is responsive to need, delivered that day or the next by a fully trained adult. The lowest-attaining 20% of children receive small-group support in the form of a daily recap and phonics games, including:

- using flashcards to recap all previously taught phonemes and graphemes;
- recapping blending of words on a whiteboard, using sample words from the lesson;
- practising spelling using magnetic letters, using sample words from the lesson;
- handwriting practice to reinforce grapheme formation.

This additional support supplements, rather than replaces, daily phonics teaching, so that no child is withdrawn from new learning to receive it.

Home Reading

The decodable Little Wandle reading practice book is sent home (with additional books also accessible in e-book format) so that success is shared with the family. From the Spring Term, a 'sharing' decodable Little Wandle book that has not yet been seen in school is also sent home weekly for further practice.

We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources to engage Speen families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, and how children learn to blend, both online and through parent workshops.

To support fidelity to the programme, Big Cat Collins Levelled books are given to children in Year 2 who have successfully passed the Phonics Screening Check.

Reading for Pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success.' (OECD, 2002)

We value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to develop our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy, in line with the Reading Framework's emphasis on developing a reading culture (see Speen School Reading Journeys for each year group).

- We aim to read aloud to children every day. Books are chosen carefully so that children experience a wide range of texts, including books that reflect the children at Speen Church of England School and our local community, alongside books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has a welcoming book corner that encourages a love of reading. These books are curated and shared with children to entice them to read widely.
- Children have access to their classroom reading corner every day during free-flow time, and books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record. Parents and carers record comments to share with adults in school, and staff respond regularly to strengthen communication between home and school.
- The school library is available for classes to use weekly and to borrow books for home reading.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to take part in Reading for Pleasure events, such as book fairs and national events including Book Week.

Impact

Mastery of Each Phase

Mastery for each phase is defined below. In line with Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised guidance, the programme does not expect all children to have mastered a phase before the class moves on; keep-up support ensures gaps are closed promptly.

Phase 2

A child who has mastered Phase 2 can:
• give the sound when shown any Phase 2 letter, securing first the starter letters s, a, t, p, i, n;
• find any Phase 2 letter, from a display, when given the sound;
• orally blend and segment CVC words;
• blend and segment in order to read and spell (using magnetic letters) VC words such as if, am, on, up, and 'silly names' such as ip, ug and ock;
• read the seven tricky words: the, to, I, no, go, into, her.

Phase 3

A child who has mastered Phase 3 can:
• give the sound when shown all or most Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes;
• find all or most Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes, from a display, when given the sound;

A child who has mastered Phase 3 can:

- blend and read CVC words (single-syllable words consisting of Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes);
- segment and make a phonemically plausible attempt at spelling CVC words;
- read the tricky words: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, all, are, by, give, live;
- spell the tricky words: the, to, I, no, go, into, her;
- write each letter correctly when following a model.

Phase 4**A child who has mastered Phase 4 can:**

- give the sound when shown any Phase 2 and Phase 3 grapheme;
- find any Phase 2 and Phase 3 grapheme, from a display, when given the sound;
- blend and read words containing adjacent consonants;
- segment and spell words containing adjacent consonants;
- read the tricky words: some, one, said, come, do, so, were, when, have, there, out, like, little;
- spell the tricky words: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, all, are, by, give, live;
- write each letter, usually correctly.

Phase 5**A child who has mastered Phase 5 can:**

- give the sound when shown any grapheme that has been taught;
- write the common graphemes for any given sound;
- apply phonic knowledge and skill as the prime approach to reading and spelling unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable;
- read and spell phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words;
- read automatically all the words in the list of 100 high-frequency words;
- accurately spell most of the words in the list of 100 high-frequency words;
- form each letter correctly.

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify swiftly any child needing additional support, in line with the Reading Framework's expectation that assessment directly informs teaching.

Formative (Assessment for Learning)

- Daily, within class, to identify children needing Keep-Up support that day or the next.
- Weekly, in the Review lesson, to assess gaps, address these immediately, and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative Assessment

- Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised summative assessments are carried out every six weeks to assess progress, identify gaps in learning, identify children needing additional support, and plan Keep-Up provision.
- Staff analyse the Little Wandle assessment tracker regularly to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, and to put additional support for teachers and pupils in place.

Statutory Assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the statutory Phonics Screening Check, administered in line with Standards and Testing Agency guidance. Any child who does not meet the expected standard re-sits the check in Year 2. Results are reported to parents and to the Local Authority in line with statutory requirements.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

- Ensures the school fulfils its statutory duties in relation to the teaching of early reading and phonics.
- Holds school leaders to account for the impact of phonics teaching, including outcomes in the Phonics Screening Check.

The Headteacher

- Ensures the school has sufficient staff trained to deliver the chosen SSP programme with fidelity.
- Ensures this policy is implemented consistently across the school and reviewed in line with updated DfE guidance.

The Phonics / English Subject Leader

- Leads training, monitoring and evaluation of phonics teaching across the school.
- Keeps up to date with DfE guidance, including any changes to the list of validated SSP programmes, and updates this policy accordingly.
- Analyses assessment data to identify trends and to direct support where it is needed most.

Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants

- Deliver daily phonics and reading practice sessions with fidelity to Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised.

- Use ongoing assessment to identify children needing Keep-Up support and provide it promptly.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

We are committed to ensuring that all children, including those with SEND, those who speak English as an additional language, and disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress in phonics. Provision is adapted in line with the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, and additional support is put in place as soon as a need is identified, so that phonics remains accessible and no child is left behind.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Phonics / English Subject Leader and the Headteacher, and is reviewed annually by the Governing Body, or sooner if the Department for Education updates its statutory or non-statutory guidance on the teaching of phonics and early reading.

Links to Other Policies

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Blend	Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or blending the sounds together to say the word — used when reading.
Consonant	Most letters of the alphabet, excluding the vowels a, e, i, o, u.
CVC words	Abbreviation for consonant-vowel-consonant words, describing the order of sounds. Examples: cat, pen, top, chat (as 'ch' makes one sound). Related terms include VC words (e.g. on, is, it), CCVC words (e.g. trap, black) and CVCC words (e.g. milk, fast).
Digraph	Two letters which together make one sound, e.g. ee, oa, ea, ch, ay. Types include: vowel digraph (at least one letter is a vowel, e.g. boat, day); consonant digraph (two consonants together, e.g. shop, thin); and split digraph, previously called 'magic e' (two letters that work as a pair to make one sound but are separated within the word, e.g. a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, as in cake or pine).
Grapheme	Written letter(s) representing one single sound (phoneme), e.g. a, l, sh, air, ck.
Morpheme	The smallest linguistic part of a word that carries meaning, e.g. 'un-', 'break' and '-able' in 'unbreakable'.
Phoneme	A single sound that can be made by one or more letters, e.g. s, k, z, oo, ph, igh.
Phonics	Teaching children to listen to and identify the sounds that make up words, to help them read and write.
Segment	The opposite of blending: splitting a word into its individual sounds — used when spelling and writing.
Syllable	A part of a word containing a single vowel sound, pronounced as a unit, e.g. 'book' has one syllable and 'reading' has two.
Trigraph	Three letters which together make one sound, e.g. igh, ear, air.
Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP)	A structured approach, validated by the DfE, in which children are taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences in a clearly defined sequence and taught to blend sounds to read and segment to spell, as the prime approach to decoding print.
Keep-up support	Same-day or next-day additional teaching for any child who needs it to stay on track with the pace of the whole-class phonics programme, as recommended by the DfE in place of a 'catch-up' model.