

**A COMPLETE PHONICS RESOURCE
TO SUPPORT CHILDREN**

Phonics and early reading policy

The context of our school

We are a small rural village school that currently has on average 105 pupils on role. Our percentage of disadvantaged children in school is 23% and the percentage of SEND children is 16%. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of socio economic background.

Intent

Our intent is to develop literate children who:

- love reading and get excited about books;
- have the opportunity to listen to stories that are beyond their own reading ability, for enjoyment;
- are given the chance to participate in class reading sessions where literature is explored, discussed and linked to real life;
- enjoy reading at home;
- understand the sound and spelling system and use these to read accurately;
- read with confidence, fluency and understanding, using a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct;
- have an interest in a wide range of texts, reading for enjoyment and information;
- have an interest in words and their meanings and develop a wide vocabulary;
- understand a range of text types and genres;
- can evaluate and justify their preferences;
- have developed their imaginations, inventiveness and critical awareness.

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Houghton Conquest Lower 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 in Nursery/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.



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As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Houghton Conquest Lower 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.

Comprehension

At Houghton Conquest Lower 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.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Preschool

- 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 Preschool children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

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.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching 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 Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.



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Guided Reading

- Children in Years 2-4 have 3 Guided Reading sessions a week and use VIPERS as a tool to build fluency and comprehension skills.
- Year 1 take part in whole class VIPERS Guided Reading sessions three times a week, in addition to the Little Wandle practise reading sessions. Within these sessions the children begin to develop their understanding of vocabulary linked to VIPERS and develop key skills ready to be independently applied to their work in Guided Reading sessions in Year 2.
- Children read outside the daily Literacy lessons for information gathering, research and for pleasure (D.E.A.R time and paired reading). All classes have regular opportunities to listen to and enjoy texts that are beyond their own reading ability.

Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice has 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 Year 2 and above 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 Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15-20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:
 - are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
 - 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 rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.



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- 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. 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.

In Years 2 and 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 ensure success is shared with the family.
 - Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the [Everybody read!](#) resources.
 - 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.
- Once ready, children move onto the book band books and teachers monitor pupils' progression and respond to individuals' needs. Children's progression through the reading stages is celebrated and reading engagement is rewarded within weekly celebration assemblies.
- Once children have finished the book band levels they can become free readers and pupils are encouraged to read widely and for pleasure through the use of the school library and communication in children's reading logs allow parents to communicate the kind of texts that children are reading at home.
- Reading forms part of the essential homework: all children are expected to read at home at least three times a week. Reading targets are discussed at parent consultations so that parents can see the skills that their child is working on and further support the acquisition of these at home.



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Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book to an adult daily.
- Each teacher from Reception to Year 4 identifies the bottom 20% of readers within their class and these children are read with daily. This is revised every half term and teachers track the progress of the children closely.

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.
- SLT AND Literacy lead 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.
- Literacy Lead does regular observations to ensure the consistency of teaching in both phonics and Guided Reading.
- Regular training by Literacy Lead is carried out in staff meetings to upskill staff and ensure consistency

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 Houghton Conquest Lower School, and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.



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- 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 Preschool/Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children from Reception onwards have a home 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.
- Each class visits the local library every half term.
- Key Stage 1 teachers have special story sacks which contain a variety of texts which engage and excite children. These are read to the children on a daily basis.
- Events such as 'The Reading Breakfast' are held for the whole community to promote the importance of reading within the school.
- During all reading opportunities across the school, from Foundation to Y4, particular attention is paid towards vocabulary extension and comprehension strategies. From Y1, pupils participate in daily Literacy lessons where their reading teaching continues through shared and whole class reading. Teachers actively model comprehension strategies and make use of talking partners to discuss vocabulary and further develop children's inferential skills and knowledge of authorial intent. Teachers plan differentiated sessions covering the Age Related Expectations for the year group using question stems linked to the different strands of reading comprehension (see Appendix 1)..



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- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. It must be booked via the school booking system. 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.
 - In Years 2-4 teachers assess during Guided Reading sessions and resources and texts are planned and adapted to meet the needs of the children in the class.
- **Summative assessment** for [Reception](#) and [Year 1](#) 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.
 - Summative assessment for reading takes place termly when children throughout school undertake formal reading. Any pupils who are deemed to be underperforming are swiftly identified and participate in intervention sessions which are designed to close the gap between themselves and their peers. The progress of these pupils is discussed with the SLT and SENDCo during Pupil Performance meetings.
 - From YR to Y4, achievements and areas of concern are recorded on pupil tracking sheets which have different strands of comprehension clearly identified and these inform future planning. Teachers use daily formative assessment strategies to ensure that all teaching is accurately pitched and challenging. Ongoing teacher assessment of reading informs reading targets.



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- Reading assessments are used termly to support with assessing a child's comprehension skills. When a child has a good level of fluency and they have a secure understanding of what they are reading, they are moved onto the next colour band.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - in Year 1, 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 6, when they are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. For Year 1 children, this is when they read the final fluency assessment at 60–70+ words per minute. Older children can exit the Rapid Catch-up programme when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at age-related expectations. After exiting their programme, children do not need to read any more fully decodable books.
- 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 plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.
- The **Rapid Catch-up assessment** is used
 - with any child new to the school in Year 2 and above to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.
 - Daily reading is carried out from Reception to Year 4 to ensure children make rapid progress and this is monitored by the class teacher.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Ongoing assessment for Rapid Catch-up in Years 2 to 6

- Children in Year 2 to 6 are assessed through:
 - the Rapid Catch-up initial assessment to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan appropriate teaching



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- the Rapid Catch-up summative assessments to assess progress and inform teaching
 - the Rapid Catch-up fluency assessments when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books for age 7+.
- The fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They also assess when children are ready to exit the Rapid Catch-up programme, which is when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

The ability to read is fundamental to children's development as independent learners. We believe that all children are entitled to high quality teaching and learning and we embrace the philosophy of inclusion. All children at Houghton Conquest Lower School have the opportunity to develop reading skills at an appropriate level through the provision of carefully planned, targeted work in their Literacy lessons and within the wider curriculum. Intervention groups are in place to further support children with additional needs or those who have any difficulties in a particular area. As mentioned above, children who struggle to read continue to follow a phonics programme for reading until they possess the skills to move on. The needs of children on the SEND register are planned for as necessary and detailed on their My Outcome Provision Maps and a variety of teaching methods are used to support the learning styles of different children. In this way, no child will be excluded from participating in reading activities. We celebrate diversity through recognising our children's skills and knowledge and by the study of material from a variety of cultures. Texts used represent all cultures in a positive light and show both genders in a range of roles. The interests of both boys and girls are taken into account in the selection of materials to support the development of reading skills.

Monitoring and Review

The Literacy subject leader, in consultation with the SLT, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of reading. In discussion with the governors, areas for development and resource needs are identified. Reading standards are reviewed through:

- EYFS/ KS1/ external moderation;
- learning walks and observations;
- staff and pupil perception surveys.