

# Phonics Policy



Groveside  
School

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**Document History**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

At Groveside School our aim is to provide an excellent education for all our pupils; our vision which is rooted in a desire to bring out the best in all pupils and prepare them for success in life. The English curriculum is designed to provide all our pupils with the core knowledge that is the foundation for further success. We aim to develop each young person holistically, so that all Groveside pupils become active and economically self-sufficient citizens.

Pupils are taught how to think, how to evaluate, how to be critical thinkers and active beneficiaries of information. We hope that our curriculum enables pupils to appreciate and participate in the full richness of the human experience.

## **INTENT**

At Groveside School, we actively promote the development of reading skills through a positive reading culture embedded throughout the school. We are ambitious about teaching pupils to enjoy books and become successful readers, ensuring a carefully sequenced approach taking into account pupils' individual strengths, weaknesses, profile of need and current knowledge and skills. Early reading has a high profile in the curriculum, ensuring sufficient time and emphasis is given to pupils developing pre-reading skills and learning to read effectively.

Teaching pupils to read is an essential part of their learning. Reading is a skill that helps to develop vocabulary and improve understanding of words. In synthetic phonics lessons, pupils learn the relationship between letters and sounds. Teaching them to recognise the sounds each letter makes and how to put them together, enables them to read. It also helps with spelling as they learn how to break up words into sounds, in order to spell them.

Phonics is just one part of teaching reading and works alongside teaching comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. [See Reading Policy for more details]

## **WHY DO WE TEACH PHONICS?**

Teaching pupils to read is an essential part of their learning. Reading is a skill that helps to develop vocabulary and improve understanding of words. In synthetic phonics lessons, pupils learn the relationship between letters and sounds.

Teaching pupils to recognise the sounds each letter makes and how to put them together, enables them to read. It also helps with spelling as they learn how to break up words into sounds, in order to spell them. The idea that surrounds synthetic phonics is that once they are comfortable with the letters and sounds that make up words, pupils should even be able to read 'nonsense' words that don't actually exist in the English language.

## OUR AIMS:

- To establish a cohesive whole-school approach with progression and continuity in the teaching and learning of phonics throughout the school with a focus on quality first teaching.
- To ensure that systematic synthetic phonics (following the Little Wandle programme) is the first approach pupils use to help with their reading and spelling.
- To ensure pupils learn to read and write all 44 graphemes in the English language.
- To ensure pupils have specific strategies to identify and decode common exception words (tricky words).
- To have robust assessment procedures to check progress and identify pupils in need of intervention.
- For pupils to apply their phonic knowledge in their reading and writing across the whole curriculum.
- For pupils to develop a love of reading and enjoy reading for pleasure confidently across a range of genres.

## OBJECTIVES:

- To provide consistent, high-quality phonics teaching that ensures all pupils have a strong foundation upon which to tackle the complex processes of reading and writing.
- To ensure that the teaching of synthetic phonics is systematic and progressive throughout the foundation stage, key stage one and key stage two for those pupils needing interventions to support phonetic knowledge and understanding.
- To ensure that pupils have strong phonetic knowledge, understanding and skills so that they can decode words confidently and engage with higher-order reading and writing skills.

## IMPLEMENTATION

We use Little Wandle as our Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme (SSP) and follow it with fidelity, avoiding mixing methods in order to provide a clear path to success for learners. It is high quality and robust in its purpose. With a clear, structured progression through the programme, it allows all our pupils to meet or exceed the expected standard. The Little Wandle approach combines rigorous progression with engaging learning materials. We believe that pupils learn best when they are enjoying their learning and that this comes from a mix of bright, fun and engaging lesson resources within a clear and systematic approach that builds on pupils' skills daily.

## HOW WE DELIVER OUR PHONICS TEACHING

The teaching of Phonics at Groveside School will follow the systematic synthetic phonics scheme, Little Wandle. Staff will be trained to deliver Little Wandle lessons with regular in-house training updates to ensure consistent high-quality teaching. Extra support will be given to any staff wanting or identified as needing more support.

A whole class teaching approach will expose all pupils to learning, differentiated by the level of support and the expected outcomes. Each phonics session will follow the four-part teaching and learning cycle of revisit and review, teach, practise and then apply new learning. Further necessary catch-up sessions for those pupils who need them will be led by all staff.

We use both individual and guided reading to teach reading alongside phonics. We also use a mix of eBooks and physical books.

## TIMETABLING/STRUCTURE

The Little Wandle teaching sequence introduces each new letter sound correspondence over two days. The first day focuses on blending to read skills and the second day on segmenting to spell. Reading and writing are interlinked so there will naturally be overlap, but by separating the skills, teaching has more clarity and pupils have more opportunity to learn and apply before moving on. Teachers will make frequent links between phonics sessions and reading and writing throughout the day and across the curriculum.

Whilst phonics is not taught discreetly throughout Key Stage 2, many of the sounds and patterns are revised and developed through English lessons. Staff are trained to deliver Little Wandle so that it can be used to support those who need it throughout school. Further catch-up sessions for those pupils who need them will be provided through interventions.

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

The Little Wandle wall freeze flashcards and sounds mats are available in classrooms for those who need them to support their learning.

Pupils will read fully decodable reading books carefully matched to their phonics learning to practise newly acquired phonics sounds. They will also be reading books that allow them to develop fluency in sounds they have already learnt.

## PARENTAL SUPPORT

We encourage parental involvement in securing learners understanding of phonics and can provide resources and training to enable parents to help children consolidate learning at home. This should equip parents to manage expectations around tricky words, answer questions, and most importantly, to hear their child read aloud regularly.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Regular assessment will be used to keep pupils on track. A baseline assessment will take place within a few weeks of each child starting school. Formative assessments will be ongoing daily as teachers observe pupil's participation in lessons. Summative assessments will be used at the end of each six week teaching block in line with the Little Wandle scheme.

Pupils with learning difficulties will work towards their target within the Little Wandle pathway at a pace that is suitably challenging. Pupils who are gifted and talented will be working to deepen and broaden their understanding, with additional enrichment reading books that may contain words beyond the taught code. EAL pupils will receive appropriate support to enable them to access the curriculum.

## **KS3/4 CATCH-UP**

Where KS3 or KS4 pupils still need to learn phonics in order to access reading for learning and as a life skill we will use the assessment tools within Little Wandle but can adapt our delivery to better suit their needs and maturity through the KS3 Phonics programme from Abigail Steele. The use of this programme is intended to complement the Little Wandle system rather than replace core principles.