



**THE
WHITE
HOUSE
SCHOOL**

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

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1. Context

The White House School is an Independent Specialist school. We are part of an ethical and progressive organisation that believes it can achieve real change for pupils and their families.

The White House School is situated within BCP local authority and offers a specialist learning provision which emphasises the development of core academic understanding, encourages creativity, celebrates outdoor learning and promotes the growth of essential life skills. We aim to establish a safe, creative and vibrant environment where children feel challenged and supported in their learning, achieving high levels of wellbeing and academic success. We aim to nurture and develop mutual respect, tolerance, teamwork, perseverance, kindness and good manners.

We adhere to the values of ARC:

- Ambition
- Resilience
- Community

The White House School operates within the SPELL framework. SPELL is The National Autistic Society’s framework for understanding and responding to the needs of children and adults on the autism spectrum. It focuses on five principles that have been identified as vital elements of best practice in autism and emphasises ways to change the environment and our approaches to meet the specific needs of each person.

SPELL stands for Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal and Links:

Structure	Structure makes the world a more predictable, accessible and safer place. We can support people on the autism spectrum in creating structured environments using visual information.
Positive (approaches and expectations)	We must seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self-esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.
Empathy	We must try to see the world from the standpoint of the autistic child or adult, knowing what it is that motivates or interests them but importantly what may also frighten, preoccupy or otherwise distress them.
Low arousal	Approaches and the environment need to be calm and ordered in such a way so as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.

Links

Autistic people, their parents or advocates should be seen as partners. Open links and communication will reduce the risk of misunderstanding, confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.

2. Introduction and Document Purpose

The curriculum at The White House School is holistic, thematic and mindful in approach. We recognise the individual learning journey of each pupil and ensure our planning takes in to account the needs, outcomes, learning styles, ages and aptitudes of all pupils, including those with EAL, those classified as Gifted and Talented as well as those who require intervention and extra support. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background or their level of need. This document reflects the school values and philosophy in relation to the teaching and learning of phonics and early reading. It sets out a framework within which both teaching and non-teaching staff can operate and gives guidance on planning, teaching and assessment.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements and expectations set out in:

- The National Curriculum programmes of study for English
[English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414222/primary-programmes-of-study-key-stages-1-and-2.pdf)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015
[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414222/primary-programmes-of-study-key-stages-1-and-2.pdf)
- The Equality Act 2010
[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)
- The Reading Framework 2023 [The reading framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-reading-framework)

4. Our Intent

We believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. We teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We teach phonics throughout the school, for children who need this and follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression programme, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through the school.

Our aim is that all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. 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 value reading as an essential life skill. By the time children leave us, we aim for them to be able to read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our goal is to ensure 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.

As 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.

Our Reading Leader is Heather Brown, Head of Key Skills. heather@thewhiteschool.org

5. How We Teach It – ‘Implementation’

Content and Delivery

Phonics, spelling and handwriting is taught six times a week, with one session being dedicated to handwriting. As we teach phonics and spelling five times a week, teachers will adapt the Little Wandle plans to meet the needs of their classes. There are opportunities throughout the week for adults to read 1:1 with pupils, with a timetabled session each week for this to be the focus.

Pupils are assessed to be assigned to the correct Phase at the beginning of the Autumn 1 term, or at their time of entry into the school.

Many of our pupils will be delivered phonics via the Little Wandle Rapid Catch-Up programme at the start of their education at The White House School. This is due to the disrupted education many of the pupils arrive to the school with. It is necessary to ensure all gaps in knowledge are filled before moving on to the next Phase. If a pupil does not have any gaps in their knowledge they will be placed in the correct Phase, ready to move their learning on via the Little Wandle programme of study.

Children following our Discovery Curriculum pathway are assessed using Little Wandle assessments. These assessments are adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. This may include completing a non-speaking assessment for pupils who have difficulties with speech sounds or have limited verbal communication. It may be appropriate for pupils following the Curiosity Curriculum pathway to follow the SEND programme of Little Wandle. This will be assessed by the teacher’s judgement. If a pupil in the Curiosity Curriculum needs to follow the SEND programme, this will be delivered via a 1:1 or small group intervention.

Within the Discovery Curriculum class there is a focus GPC each week. This is referred to as ‘the sound of the week’. This pacing is important to the retention of information of these pupils. If a pupil is able to show a strong understanding of ‘the sound of the week’ prior to the next sound being introduced, they will not be introduced to a new sound. They will be given the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding and fluency using these graphemes to spell different words.

Across the school the use of symbols is an important resource for the development of early reading. Pupils, particularly those in the Discovery Pathway, will be exposed to symbols throughout their learning as a way of developing their associations with words and symbols.

Pupils who are ready to move on from phonics and have successfully completed Phase 5 phonics will move onto the Little Wandle Bridge to Spelling programme.

Streaming

It may be deemed appropriate to stream some groups for phonics teaching. The age of the pupil and where they are potentially placed will be taken into consideration when deciding whether streaming is appropriate. Streaming within phonics teaching is likely to happen for pupils who are at the same phase and are of a similar age but not in the same class. This will also happen if there are children within the Curiosity curriculum pathway who need to learn on the SEND pathway for phonics. If a pupil is older, for example in Upper Key Stage 2, it is not appropriate for the pupil to be streamed into a class with Key Stage 1 pupils. The impact on that pupil’s self-esteem would be too significant. Instead, that pupil will be supported with a phonics intervention in their classroom. This would also be the case if a pupil is able to read whole words, but struggles with individual GPCs. In this instance, a pupil may be able to access the Bridge to Spelling programme, whilst having a Phase 2 phonics intervention.

Home Learning

The decodable reading practice book is taken home or assigned online to ensure success is shared with the family. The assigned book for pupils will focus on GPCs which are being learnt that week. The practice

books are Little Wandle Big Cat books. Each book has decoding, prosody and comprehension activities, which school encourage carers to do with their child.

Due to the needs of the pupils, there may be some flexibility in the book assigned to them, in order for it to match their comprehension skills. For example, if a pupil is a confident word reader, but struggles with GPC recognition, they may be assigned a book with more challenging comprehension questions, as well as a book which is more suitable to their current decoding skills.

Pupils completing the Bridge to Spelling programme will be assigned a Fluency book, in accordance with Little Wandle advice.

Curiosity Curriculum pupils are also set spellings to learn each week from Little Wandle. These spellings use the GPCs being learnt that week. These spellings are tested each week.

An appropriate book, chosen by the teacher, based on the pupils understanding and interests will be assigned for carers to read to pupils at home. This is to encourage a love of reading and develop vocabulary and language skills.

How Individual Reading is Promoted

- All children are heard read 1:1 or 2:1 with an adult at least 3x a week.
- Class Teacher or Learning Support Assistant to check Reading Records/Home School Communication books on a weekly basis to monitor home reading.
- NGRT used 3 times a year by the class teacher to inform assessment and establish reading progress made.

Practice Reading Sessions

Pupils in the Curiosity curriculum pathway will read with an adult, either 1:1 or 2:1 with an adult in school 3x a week. These reading sessions will be the practice reading sessions from the Little Wandle Scheme, using the decodable book the pupils are set for their home learning. There are three skill sections at the back of each Little Wandle book – decoding, prosody and comprehension, and these will inform each of the three sessions. The session may be 1:1 or 2:1 depending on what is the most appropriate. These sessions must be timetabled into the week and will be recorded. These sessions will be separate from the phonics lessons as we believe it is important for pupils to have dedicated phonics lessons and dedicated and protected time reading with an adult each week.

Pupils learning in the Discovery pathway will complete 1:1 practice reading sessions 2x a week. These reads will focus on decoding and comprehension. The decision has been made due to not complete a prosody focus as a 1:1 reading session as pupils are developing their verbal communication skills. Within the Discovery pathway classes, stories are read by adults during lunchtime and at the end of the day, and adults ensure to they use appropriate expression to ensure pupils are exposed to the prosody.

Classroom Organisation and Teaching Style

Class teachers are responsible for their own class organisation and teaching style in relation to phonics and early reading, while at the same time ensuring these complement and reflect the overall aims and philosophy of the school.

In classes children are taught in a variety of ways:

- Individually.
- In groups – groups may be organised by ability (mixed or similar) age, friendship, or other criteria. Group work is organised to provide cooperation and effective learning and understanding.
- As a class – where introductions and discussions are appropriate.

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 pupil's cognitive load. 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 procedures, as outlined in our Quality Assurance Calendar, to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

6. Assessment and Reporting – 'Impact'

We will track pupils' progress through the curriculum using a combination of formative, summative and diagnostic assessment. Feedback will clearly explain to pupils what they are doing well and what they need to do next to continue to improve their work.

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.

A placement assessment is used:

- With any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Ongoing assessment for Rapid Catch-up in Years 1 to 6

- 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 6+.

Statutory Assessment

Children do not have to sit the Year 1 Phonics screening check. Year 2 pupils who did not pass the Year 1 phonics screening check in their previous settings do not have to re-sit it.

Additional Assessments:

- Reading assessment completed termly (GL Assessment NGRT test).
- GL Assessment Progress English tests taken in the Autumn and Summer terms in order to measure attainment distance travelled and progress made across the academic year.
- Weekly spelling check-ups.
- SPaG assessment completed termly (GL Assessment NGST test)

Progress will be reported to parents at the end of each term via reports, during parent's evenings and through the pupil planner.

7. Resources

There is a central bank of Little Wandle resources and Little Wandle Big Cat books kept by the Reading Leader. These are inventoried regularly to ensure all classes have what they need to deliver phonics and early reading effectively.

The school is subscribed to the RNIB book share as many of the pupils qualify as having a print-disability. This allows teachers to assign books to pupils online. If a pupil does not have access to a device to be able

read books assigned online, they will be given a book from the Little Wandle Big Cat resources kept within school.

We also have a collection of Little Wandle SEND resources, which give pupils a large-print, multi-sensory approach to phonics and early reading teaching.

Dictionaries and thesauruses

To support with writing and spelling, we will make sure that pupils have access to dictionaries and thesauruses by:

- Having at least 1 dictionary and thesaurus available in each classroom
- Allowing pupils to use the computer during lessons to look up word meanings and synonyms

8. Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils or those with specific talents.
- Pupils with low prior attainment.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

To ensure a fully inclusive learning environment and that all pupil's needs in the classroom are met, all teachers take in to account the individual learning styles of our pupils. The learning styles are calculated from the diagnostic GL Assessment CAT4 reports and identify if a pupil has a bias towards visual or written learning. Teachers then differentiate their tasks and resources accordingly.

Equal Opportunities

See the separate whole school Equal Opportunities policy.

Monitoring of the policy for equal opportunity in terms of its operation is ultimately the responsibility of the Headteacher, Head of Department and other members of the SLT, but all staff are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Phonics and Early Reading Policy in relation to equal opportunities.

Special Educational Needs

See the separate Special Education Needs and Inclusion Policy.

Teachers will plan lessons so that pupils with a range of SEN and/or disabilities can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

The needs of children with Statemented Special Educational Needs, will be met within the Phonics and Early Reading Policy, phonics teaching and whole school aims. Activities undertaken are matched to everyone's needs, on an individual basis. Differentiation is visible in all schemes of work and lesson plans. Pupil snapshots are also produced for each class identifying specific pupil needs.

EAL

See the separate English as an Additional Language policy.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

Differentiation

We will provide suitable differentiation to make sure that every pupil makes maximum progress in their key skills lessons, by:

- Recognising where some pupils need specific help, e.g. if they are dyslexic.
- Providing resources to scaffold pupils' learning.
- Identifying pupils who would benefit from more support in an area of their learning and running small intervention groups for targeted support to aid their progress and attainment. We will monitor these closely to move pupils in and out of these groups as needed.
- Making sure pupils who need it are extended through the use of additional, more-demanding and open-ended tasks and planned challenges within each lesson.

9. Training

Staff are encouraged to develop their own pedagogy within the subject area and the SLT support all teaching and support staff with their continuing professional development. Little Wandle offers many ongoing CPD webinars and 'How to' videos on their website which staff are encouraged to engage with.

10. Links with Other Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Curriculum Policy
- EAL Policy
- Gifted and Talented Policy
- Key Skills Subjects Policy
- Marking, Assessment and Expected Progress Policy
- Monitoring Pupil Attainment Policy
- Planning guidelines
- Promoting Fundamental British Values and Protected Characteristics Policy
- SEND Policy
- SMSC Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy