



Inspiring children to love learning and live in  
the light of Christ

## **Phonics Curriculum**

# Phonics

## Intent

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, we endeavour to provide a language rich environment that promotes speech, language and communication opportunities to strengthen children's speaking and listening skills in their own right, as well as to prepare children for learning to read fluently as quickly as possible.

We follow the detailed and systematic programme 'Rising Stars Rocket Phonics' designed in phases to provide the essential phonics skills that develop competent readers.

In Nursery we pave the way by recognising that children are never too young to start learning phonics and that we have an obligation to create readers by firstly developing listening and attention, communication and language skills and the language of movement as a precursor for letter formation and then progressing onto the key skills of oral blending and segmenting.

Teachers are ambitious in their expectations of the phonemes (sounds) and words that all children should be able to read by the end of each term. As children progress through the school, they will learn the 44 phonemes of the alphabetic code and the corresponding graphemes (letter groups).

In Reception Class they will learn the initial letter phonemes and their matching graphemes. The key skill of oral blending and segmenting is woven into all aspects of phonics teaching to support the children to quickly progress to blending phonemes together to help them to read CVC (consonant vowel consonant e.g: sat) words.

The children will learn digraph and trigraph phonemes throughout Reception progressing through Phases 2, 3, 4 and in Year One will revise and consolidate Phases 2,3, and 4 and then complete Phase 5.

In Year Two the children will revise and consolidate the previous phases and complete the programme where the main aim is for them to become more fluent readers and more accurate spellers.

This consistent and rigorous approach will provide all of our children with the foundations to engage with and develop a love of reading.

## Implementation

We use synthetic phonics and follow the 'Rising Stars Rocket Phonics' programme; this is a method of learning letter sounds and blending them together to read and write words. In addition to this, children are taught sight words linked to the National Curriculum.

As part of this, children have daily direct whole class phonics teaching sessions following the Revisit and Review, Teach, Practise and Apply, Recap/Plenary sequence. A whole class approach ensures that all children are exposed to age-related teaching content.

The guided practice that takes place during the 'Teach' part of the lesson is scaffolded to support less confident readers and adult support including direct interaction with the teacher and teaching assistant is targeted towards these children during this part of the lesson.

'Practise and Apply' activities are carefully matched to learning needs to ensure children are successful when they move onto independent work. Teachers draw upon observations and continuous assessment to ensure children are stretched and challenged and to identify children who may need additional support. Same day 'catch up' interventions take place for those children who are not working at ARE. Children work through the relevant phases, learning and developing their phonics sounds and knowledge. Progress is tracked at the end of each half term using the Rocket Phonics tracker and interventions are planned to close the gaps identified.

In Nursery, children begin with Phase 1 activities that provide a range of listening activities through play to develop their listening skills. All aspects of Phase 1 are a constant throughout Nursery and as the year progresses they begin short daily sessions to promote the key skills of oral blending and segmenting which mark the start of systematic phonic work.

In Spring 1 Nursery parents/carers are invited into Nursery to see their child's Phase 1 Phonics lesson in action and participate in a workshop that provides parents with ideas on how to support their children's early listening skills at home.

Children transition into Reception and continue to develop their listening skills throughout Phase 2, with lots of revision and consolidation of Nursery knowledge and then progress to Phase 3. Grapheme-phoneme correspondence is taught and leads into the process of segmenting whole words, selecting letters to represent those phonemes, writing the letters to encode and segmenting to decode. Phase 3 completes the teaching of the alphabet and then moves on to cover sounds represented by more than one letter, learning one representation for each of the 44 phonemes. At this stage just one grapheme (spelling) is given for each phoneme. When the children have a solid foundation in Phase 3 it allows them to quickly progress in to Phase 4, where they start to read and spell words containing adjacent consonants. No new phonemes are introduced at this phase.

Following transition into Reception, parents/carers are welcomed into school to participate in a 'Phonics in Action' lesson with their child. This provides a valuable insight into how we teach phonics and early reading. Supplementary resources and guidance are provided to support the development of phonics and early reading at home.

Children enter Year One with a solid foundation in Phase 2, 3 and 4. Whilst in Year One, they will revise and consolidate previous phases and will then complete Phase 5, broadening their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes for use in reading and spelling. They will learn alternative pronunciations and spellings for graphemes they already know.

It is expected that children entering Year Two will recap Phase 5 and begin Phase 6, which develops a variety of spelling strategies including homophones (word specific spellings) e.g. see/ sea, spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters where necessary. Also the accurate spelling of words containing unusual grapheme-phoneme correspondences e.g. laughs, two.

Many activities take place which promote pre-reading skills. Children become aware of print in their environment and begin to match pictures and words. Language comprehension is developed by talking and reading to the children and opportunities are identified across the curriculum to extend their knowledge and vocabulary. Initially, as children learn to read, they are given a picture book with no words with the intention that they will share the book and take part in a conversation generated by the pictures. Gradually, as the children's knowledge of letters and sounds develop they begin to phonetically decode words.

Our guided reading books are fully decodable and are organised into Phonics Phases. Year One and Year Two follow the Three Day Early Reading Cycle. The children will read the same text on three consecutive days with the same adult. Each session has a different focus to develop the skills of decoding, prosody and comprehension. This book is then sent home so that their reading is practised, reinforced and celebrated at home. Children are able to take an additional free choice book home, which exposes them to phonics beyond their phase to share and read for pleasure. In Autumn 2 the children in Reception Class will also follow this guided reading timetable.

Reception Class learn to form letters correctly through planned sessions linked to the letter formation pattern as part of the Rocket Phonics for Letters and Sounds. To further support the children's acquisition of phonic knowledge the children are taught to join the letters in digraphs. Year One and Year Two use Letter join pre-cursive font handwriting resources that further support the teaching of lowercase and capital letters, with clear start and finish points.

## **Phonics Teaching Progression EYFS and KS1**

This progression document is a guide to when children should be taught the different Letters and Sounds phases from Reception Class to Year Two. All staff are aware that children do not learn at the same rate and therefore progression will not be the same for every child. Additional intervention will endeavour to ensure that no child is left behind.



## **Curriculum Overview and Skills Progression**

Please see our separate Progression documents

## Impact

Ongoing formative assessment takes place within each phonics lesson and half termly assessments are completed using the 'Rising Stars, Rocket Phonics tracker. Formative assessment includes: teacher observations within each part of the lesson and the application of phonic knowledge throughout the curriculum, questioning and discussions. These outcomes are fed forward into timely teacher intervention and subsequent planning to ensure gaps in phonological knowledge are closed and progress is not limited.

Children's progress is continually reviewed to allow for movement into same day catch up intervention groups. Children are regularly moved onto the next 'Phase Sets' when their fluency and understanding show that they are ready. Children move through the phases until they reach the required standard to become a Free-Reader, choosing a book to read from our well-stocked school or class libraries.

The National Phonics Screening Check is performed in June for the Year One children. The purpose of the screening check is to confirm that all children have learned phonic decoding to an age-appropriate standard. The children who did not meet the required standard for the check in Year One enter again in Year Two with additional support provided to close identified gaps. As children enter Key Stage Two, provision is made for those children still requiring daily phonics intervention.

Pupil progress will also identify precise actions and objectives for targeted focus children, including the lowest 20% who may not meet the required standard of the Phonics Screening Check.

We recognise that quality first teaching in phonics is the essential first step in improving outcomes for all children. With this in mind, we ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are kept up to date on the latest initiatives and news through continuous professional development either by outside providers or within school. In response to monitoring, evaluation and review outcomes, weaker areas in staff subject knowledge and pedagogy are addressed with timely support.