



# *Barrowby Church of England Primary School*

## **Phonics Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

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- 1.1 This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of phonics in our school.
- 1.2 This policy reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole staff and has been approved by the Governing Body.
- 1.3 The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Headteacher and all the teaching staff, including teaching assistants.

### **2. The Nature of phonics**

- 2.1 Through high quality phonics teaching we ensure that the children have the best start possible in reading and writing. Phonics is the beginning of children's body of knowledge, skills and understanding that are an essential part of learning to read and write.
- 2.2 In order to read and understand texts children must learn to recognise/decode the words on the page.
- 2.3 Good quality systematic synthetic phonic teaching secures the skills of word recognition and decoding which allow children to read fluently. This will result in children being able to read for pleasure, then move onto children developing comprehension skills. These phonic skills need to be taught systematically.

### **3. Entitlement**

- 3.1 Early reading is taught using systematic synthetic phonics alongside other strategies for reading.
- 3.2 Pupils are systematically taught the phonemes (sounds), how to blend the sounds in a word for reading (decoding), and how to segment the sounds in order to write words (encoding). They are taught to use their phonic skills and knowledge as one approach to reading, but are also taught how to read '*harder to read and spell words*' and '*Common Exception Words*' on sight, as these do not completely follow the phonic rules.
- 3.4 Phonics teaching and learning does not stop at the end of Year 1. As children move onwards through the school, they should still be encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics as they tackle more complex books and learn to spell more sophisticated words.

### **4 Implementation**

- 4.1 At Barrowby Church of England Primary School we follow the Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), which is a systematic synthetic phonics programme, validated by the DfE. ELS uses:
  - quality whiteboard resources, focused on first quality teaching,
  - decodable texts matched directly to the programme in order to enable children

- to practise and consolidate their new learning,
  - flashcards, including mnemonics and rhymes to support teaching and learning, and
  - work books, with apply sheets to carefully match the programme.
- 4.2 Our Curriculum map for the teaching of synthetic phonics follows the ELS week by week progression to ensure fidelity to the scheme.
- 4.3 Essential Letters and Sounds (**ELS**) is a validated systematic synthetic phonics scheme, designed to teach all children to read well, quickly. Systematic, high quality phonics teaching is essential and is needed for children to achieve the goal of reading.
- 4.4 ELS is delivered through whole - class lessons, daily. Throughout ELS, each lesson uses the same teaching sequence – show, copy, repeat, until each child is independent, regardless of the year group. Children are given the opportunity to hear and say each sound, first in isolation, and then within words and sentences. When introducing a new grapheme – phoneme correspondence (GPC) a mnemonic or rhyme is used with an accompanying picture to ensure that children understand. Practise and repetition are key.
- 4.5 Each ELS lesson will follow a clear sequence as follows:
- **Review** - The children will learn previously taught graphemes, using up to 12 grapheme cards, including the graphemes most recently taught. The pure sound will be used for each grapheme. HRS (Harder to Read and Spell) words will be reviewed and oral blending and segmenting will be modelled.
  - **Teach** – A new HRS word will be introduced and used within a sentence to give a context. A new sound will be introduced, alongside the grapheme, picture and mnemonic. During this element of the lesson the children will be shown pictures of objects that include the new sound. The children will practise writing the new grapheme.
  - **Practise** - The children practise reading words with the new phoneme/graphemes – say the sounds, point to the grapheme, spot the grapheme within a words, sound out, blend and say the whole word.
  - **Apply** - The children will read or write sentences that include the new sound/grapheme and HRS word. They will complete the activity sheet during the lesson or throughout the day. They may read a decodable text as a class.
  - **Review** – The children will review all of the learning from a lesson. This may take place in the lesson or at other points throughout the day.
- 4.6 A whole – class approach ensures that all children benefit from the full curriculum. Children who encounter difficulties are supported by the teacher throughout the lesson, and where further support is required, ELS has three interventions to ensure that any learning gaps are quickly filled (see interventions). Each phonics lesson is supported by a Teaching Assistant.
- 4.7 Outside of the phonics lesson children should be given ample opportunities to apply the new skills that they have been taught, as part of English lessons and the wider curriculum.
- 5. Decodable Readers**
- 5.1 It is vital that whilst children are learning to read, they read books that match their

phonic knowledge. We use **decodable readers** by The Oxford University Press to support Essential Letters and Sounds teaching in school. These books are carefully matched to every aspect of the ELS programme.

- 5.2 Decodable readers are used during the Review lesson on Day 5 of each week and are sent home as **phonics books**, either as a hard copy or assigned as homework, through Oxford Owl. Children keep the books for one week and re – read them at least four times in this period, to develop their phonic knowledge and reading fluency.
- 5.3 The **phonics books** that are sent home are all clearly labelled with ELS Phonics Book. Children are asked to read these books, as they can access them **independently**. The other books that are sent home, as part of the Oxford Reading Tree scheme are intended as **reading for pleasure** books only. Children **are not** expected to read these independently. When sharing these books, parents/carers may ask them to decode sounds in words that have been taught or to read the Harder to Read and Spell words, on sight.
- 5.4 When reading with children on a one – to – one basis in school, as part of our reading policy, Reception and Year 1 children will read their **phonics books** to enable teachers/TA's to identify any learning gaps. This will ensure that learning gaps are filled quickly, either through whole - class teaching, targeted support in lessons or ELS interventions. Thus ensuring that all children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'.

## 6 Phonic Interventions

- 6.1 ELS is designed on the principle that all children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. Therefore, in many instances the interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher. Any child who is struggling with the new knowledge will be immediately targeted with appropriate support, usually during the apply activity.
- 6.2 If children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, ELS have three interventions that are to be delivered on a one – to – one basis. These are short and concise and last no longer than 5 minutes:
  - Oral blending
  - Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence recognition
  - Blending for reading

## 6. Assessment

- 6.1 Assessment of the children's reading skills is key to ensuring that all children make rapid progress in synthetic phonics. In order to ensure fidelity to the ELS programme we use the assessment cycle as set out in the scheme, in addition to daily in – class assessments.
  - 6.2.1 Phonic assessments occur in the fifth week of each half term. By undertaking assessment in the fifth week teachers will be able to target and close any gaps that may be present in either sound knowledge or reading skills before any upcoming school holidays.
  - 6.2.2 The half termly assessment enables teachers/TAs to identify any gaps in children's developing phonic knowledge and reading skills. The assessment represents Phase 2, up to Phase 5 graphemes and the alternative spellings for known sounds. We do

not test the children beyond what they have been taught or are capable of recalling with fluency.

6.2.3 In addition to completing the Half – Termly Assessment the children will also complete the Year One Phonics Screening Check practice. During this assessment the children will be asked to read a range of real words and pseudo words. By introducing the children to this style of testing early, we give them the greatest chance to achieve their full potential, as it becomes a known and embedded routine.

6.5 The assessment data will enable teachers to identify where there are sound and grapheme gaps, and difficulties with segmenting and blending. This will inform future interventions and identify the children that need directed support during phonics lessons. The children with gaps in their phonic and reading knowledge will be identified as part of Pupil Progress Meetings, and monitored carefully by the Phonics and English Lead in school.

## **7. Phonics Policy Review**

This policy is reviewed by the Head teacher, staff and Governors in accordance with Barrowby School's Policy and Review Cycle for approval by the Full Governing Body, every 3 years.

Last reviewed: September 2025

Next review: September 2028