



Phonics & Early Reading Policy

Policy Originator: Headteacher

Status: Non Statutory

Review Period: 3 years

Date: March 2026

Next review date: March 2028

Introduction

Shalford Infant & Nursery School is determined that every child will learn to read, regardless of background, needs or abilities. We want our children to be fluent, confident readers. They will be exposed to a wealth of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction to develop their vocabulary, language comprehension and engender a genuine love of reading and a keen interest in a range of texts. We work to inspire them to become life-long readers who enjoy books and have a desire to read for pleasure.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Shalford Infant & Nursery 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*, a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Nursery and 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.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Shalford Infant & Nursery School, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both within the phonics lesson and across the whole curriculum. We place a strong emphasis on language development because we recognise that secure speaking and listening skills underpin successful reading, writing and learning in all subjects.

Comprehension

At Shalford Infant & Nursery 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 both pleasure and purpose. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We teach children that reading is not only about decoding word accurately but also about understanding, questioning and discussing what they have read.

We develop comprehension skills through high-quality texts, carefully structured discussions and explicit teaching of vocabulary. Children are encouraged to explain their thinking, make predictions, answer questions and develop their understanding of characters, events and information.

Because 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, to ensure teaching is consistent and delivered with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Nursery

- 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, poems and non-fiction texts.
 - learning a wide range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes to develop rhythm and sound awareness.
 - activities that develop focused listening and attention, including identifying environmental sounds, instrumental sounds and oral blending.
 - opportunities to develop vocabulary through high-quality interactions and sustained shared thinking.
 - Regular opportunities for talk, conversation and retelling to strengthen language structures.
- We explicitly develop children's phonological awareness through rhyme, alliterations, syllable awareness and oral segmenting and blending.
- We model correct pronunciation of sounds and words to support accurate speech development.
- We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception through secure listening skills, strong language development and understanding that sounds can be identified and manipulated within words.

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: with phonics 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 Phase 3 grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs), and to read and spell words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
 - Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Phonics and Spelling in Year 2

- In Year 2, children begin the Autumn term by revisiting and consolidating Phase 5 grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) to ensure fluency, accuracy and automaticity in reading and spelling.
- Following this revision period, children move on to the Little Wandle Bridge to Spelling programme, where they apply their phonics knowledge to more complex spelling patterns and rules.
- This programme supports the transition from phonics to more advanced spelling strategies and helps children develop independence and confidence in their writing.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. Keep-up lessons follow the same structure as 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 who is not yet fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children receive urgent support to prevent the gaps between themselves and their peers from widening.

- *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments are used to identify the gaps in children's phonic knowledge. Keep-up lessons then target these gaps precisely, delivering teaching at a pace to help children to make rapid progress.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These sessions:
 - are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children.
 - Use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge, guided by 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.
- 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: applying phonics knowledge to read words accurately.
 - Prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - Comprehension: teaching children to understand and think about the text.
- In Reception these sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups to accelerate their progress so they can begin to read decodable books.
- In Year 2, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to develop accuracy, fluency, and comprehension with decodable books. Once children can read with speed, accuracy and understanding, the move onto the Little Wandle Fluency Programme

Little Wandle Fluency: Reading in Year 2

- In Year 2, children start the Little Wandle Fluency programme once they are ready. Children join this programme when they:
 - Have completed the Little Wandle core phonics programme
 - Have been reading Phase 5 Set 5 decodable books for at least five weeks
 - Can read with accuracy, speed, and understanding
- Children take part in small-group reading sessions three times a week, led by a fully trained adult. Groups can have up to 11 children. Sessions:
 - Use carefully selected chapter books to challenge and extend children's reading skills
 - Focus on developing fluency, including accurate decoding, appropriate pace, phrasing, and expression (prosody)
 - Include opportunities to revisit tricky vocabulary, discuss meaning, and deepen understanding
 - Are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group regularly
- The programme helps children become confident, independent readers who can:
 - Read aloud smoothly and with expression
 - Understand longer and more complex texts while reading
 - Talk about the text, make predictions, and explain their thinking
- Children who still need extra support with decoding or phonics continue to receive small-group or one-to-one practice, so everyone can become a fluent and confident reader.

Home reading

- Children take home their decodable reading practice books so that successes can be shared with the family and reading progress can be supported at home.
- Children on the Year 2 Little Wandle Fluency programme take home their longer fluency books once they have finished reading the book in school. This allows them to practise reading with accuracy, expression, and understanding at home.
- Reading for pleasure books go home for all children, giving parents the opportunity to share stories and model reading for enjoyment.

- We provide families with guidance and support using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parent resources. These resources help parents understand:
 - How phonics is taught in school
 - The benefits of sharing books at home
 - How children learn to blend sounds and decode words
 - Other aspects of our reading provision

Resources are shared both online and through workshops, helping families actively engage in their child's reading journey.

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 in class to consolidate their learning and build confidence.

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 across all classes. We 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.
- The Reading Leader, who is also the Early Years Leader, uses the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching. Summative data is used to identify children who need additional support and highlight gaps in learning.

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 across the school.

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including texts that reflect the children at Shalford Infant & Nursery School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- 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 Nursery, Reception and Year 1, children have access to the reading corner every day in their independent learning 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 (Reception-Year 2) visits the local library once a year.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. 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 children's progress and to identify any child who may need additional support so that they can receive that support as soon as possible.

- **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.
- **Summative assessment** 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 the Headteacher and the Phonics and Early Reading lead, 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.
- The [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised placement assessment](#) is used:
 - with any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan provide appropriate extra teaching.

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 catch-up

- Children in Year 2 are assessed through:
 - their teacher's ongoing formative assessment
 - the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds* placement assessment
 - the appropriate half-termly assessments.