



Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Last reviewed: September 2025

Next review due: September 2026

How we teach Phonics in EYFS and Year 1

Synthetic phonics is taught using the Little Wandle programme throughout EYFS and Year 1. This is used to ensure pupils are taught the phonemes in the correct order using Little Wandle's weekly planning. Whole-class teaching takes place daily.

Lessons are fast paced and usually last no more than 25 minutes; to ensure all pupils are engaged and enjoying their phonics learning.

- In the nursery, children follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised 'Foundations for Phonics' guidance. The focus is on daily oral blending and language development through high quality stories and rhymes.
- In Reception and Y1, children follow the progression within Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme. Phonics is taught daily and there is a review session on a Friday.
- Phonics starts in Reception in week 2 to ensure the children make a strong start.
- By the end of Reception, children will have been taught up to the end of phase 4.
- By the end of year 1, children will have been taught up to the end of phase 5.
- Children in year 2 recap any gaps in their phonics knowledge in the autumn term.
- Reception lessons start at 15 minutes, with daily additional oral blending – increasing quickly to 30 minutes.
- Year 1 lessons are no longer than 25 minutes.

Reading practice sessions

- Children across Reception, Year 1, Year 2 (and beyond if appropriate) apply their phonics knowledge by using a full matched decodable reader in a small group reading practice session.
- These sessions are 15 minutes long and happen three times a week. There are approximately 6 children in a group.
- The sessions follow the model set out in Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised.
- The children then take the same book home the following week to ensure success is shared with the family.
- In Reception these sessions start in week 4. Children who are not yet blending take a wordless book home.
-

Formative assessment takes place in each phonics lesson and those pupils who are struggling are quickly identified. This daily assessment is used to inform future planning and interventions. Summative assessment of phonemes and blending takes place **at the end of every 6-week unit** and is used to identify any children who are falling behind or at risk of falling behind. For those children who are in the lowest 20% of the class cohort, extra teaching is given in the form of regular 1:1 intervention. These interventions usually happen twice per week.

Phonics does not stand alone. It is referred to throughout many areas of the curriculum, with children prompted to use different strategies where appropriate.

Phase 1 teaching begins in nursery and is threaded through all phases. Pupils are taught to listen carefully for sounds in the environment, enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities, identify initial sounds and orally blend and segment.

Phase 2 teaching starts in the Spring Term in Reception. Phase 2 introduces 36 graphemes over ten weeks of teaching. During this phase, we begin oral blending and segmenting before moving on to blending and segmenting with letters. At the end of this phase, children are introduced to words ending with the 's' suffix. 22 tricky words will also be taught during this phase.

Pupils then move onto **phase 3** in the Autumn Term. During this phase pupils, learn more new sounds, most of which are digraphs and trigraphs. This phase is taught over ten weeks and during this time a further 9 tricky words are introduced for reading as well as some compound words and words ending with the 'ing' and 'es' suffixes.

The spelling of all of the tricky words (from Phase 2 and Phase 3) are secured.

By the end of phase 3 pupils know one way of writing the 44 phonemes.

In the Summer Term, pupils are taught **phase 4**. This introduces pupils to reading and spelling longer words and consolidating phase 3 sounds within them. All of the most common suffixes become readable in this phase through the teaching. A further 18 tricky words are taught and their spellings are secured.

In Year 1 pupils are firstly provided with five weeks of a Phase 3 and Phase 4 recap. The recap also covers a review of all of the tricky words taught so far.

Phase 5 teaching then begins in the second half of the Autumn Term and lasts until the end of the Spring Term. During this phase pupils, are taught alternative spellings for the phonemes taught in phase 2 and 3. A further 34 tricky words are also taught in this time.

The first half of the Summer Term provides children with a review of Phase 5 before the screening check in June.

In the second half of the Summer Term, the rest of the Phase 5 graphemes (that are not required for the Phonics Screening Check) are taught alongside a further 8 tricky words.

The tricky words are words that cannot be segmented and blended at the developmental stage that the children are working at.

Phonics teaching sequence

Little Wandle teaching sequence for most lessons:

Revisit and review			Teach and practise					Practise and apply		
GPCs	Words	Tricky words	New GPC	Oral blending	New words	Example definitions and sentences	New tricky word	Read/write the sentence	Spelling	

GPCs – Children are shown grapheme cards to which they respond by saying the corresponding phoneme(s).

Words - Children are shown words containing graphemes that they have already learnt to read within words and the children respond by reading the words.

Tricky Words – Children are shown some of the tricky words that they have already learnt. Children are to sight-read these.

New GPC – The focus GPC for the day is introduced.

Oral blending – The children practice orally blending the focus GPC within words.

New words – Children are shown words containing the new GPC and are supported to segment and blend the GPCs in order to decode (read) the words. For some of these words, an example definition and

sentence is provided which can be shared with the children to help them to understand the meaning of the word.

New tricky word – a new tricky word is introduced and the children are told which ‘part’ of the word makes it ‘tricky’ to read (it is the grapheme for which the children have not been introduced to the phoneme for yet).

Read/write the sentence – The children are supported to read a sentence which contains words with the focus GPC in. The children may also write the sentence.

Spelling – Children are supported to segment words containing the focus GPC into their individual phonemes and then use this segmenting for spelling. During this ‘Spelling’ section, the children also practise spelling the newly learnt tricky word from earlier in the session.



Reading practice sessions with decodable reading books three times a week

Following the session, children are provided with reading books matched to their reading ability to read. The books are read over a minimum of three sessions so each child is listened to reading at least three times per week.

Session 1; Decoding – the first reading practice session focuses on decoding the text, with the children concentrating on applying their phonic knowledge and developing fluency when reading the words.

Session 2; Prosody - The second reading session provides the opportunity to read the book again and practise reading with prosody so the children develop reading with appropriate meaning, stress and intonation. It provides an opportunity to explore characters’ feelings, what words mean and how punctuation adds to the meaning.

Session 3; Comprehension - By the third session, the children should be automatically applying their decoding skills to read with greater accuracy and fluency, enabling their working memory to be freed up to focus on comprehension. The purpose of the reading practice session for comprehension is to develop the children’s comprehension skills by using the reading content domains (2015 Key Stage 1: English reading test framework).

Ideas for Teaching

These activities can be used to support pupils who are struggling with blending.

Blend It

Have a planned list of words that include the appropriate graphemes that are being taught. (No more than four). Have the corresponding flashcards to make the words.

- Make one of the words using the flashcards, saying the phonemes as you put them down.
- Point to each grapheme as you say the sound, whilst the child watches and listens. Repeat three times then blend the word.
- Pick the cards up and ask the child to make the word, saying the phoneme as they put them down.
- Child points to the grapheme as they say the sound, repeat three times and then blends the word.
- Repeat with other words.

Oral Blending

Have prepared four pictures or words that include sounds appropriate to the phase being practiced.

- Show the child one picture/word
- "My turn"- adult sounds out the word. Repeat three times.
- "Your turn"- Child repeats and blends the word.
- Repeat with all the pictures/words

Countdown

Choose a target phoneme that a child needs to practise to create a list of no more than eight words. Ensure other words contain phonemes that the child can read fluently.

- Child to read through list of words using blending for reading.
- Give child a 30 second timer. Child then tries to read all the words before the timer runs out.
- Repeat until the child is able to read all the words fluently before the timer runs out.

All these activities are suitable to use with all phases.

These activities are suitable for supporting children to learn the grapheme/phoneme correspondence.

GPC Grid

Provide children with a 5x5 grid. Pick a grapheme that pupils are struggling with and put this onto each row twice. Fill other spaces with graphemes that children are confident with.

Adult to point and say the phonemes, one line at a time. Pupil to copy. Repeat until all lines are complete.

You could adapt the grid and use in different ways;

- Make two copies, cut up rows and pupils copy the complete one.
- Make it into a jigsaw.
- Use tricky words rather than graphemes.

Win It

Choose a grapheme that the pupil is unfamiliar with.

- Show the unknown grapheme. (Flashcard)
- Emphasis the shape by running your finger over the grapheme and saying the sound as you go along.

- Ask pupil to repeat this at least three times.
- Put unfamiliar grapheme into a collection of known graphemes.
- Go through the flashcards.
- If the pupil recognises the unknown grapheme, put it at the back and continue to show the cards.
- If child doesn't recognise the grapheme, tell them the phoneme. Ask children to repeat and put it nearer the front.

Three is a Row

- Choose 9 words that contain the focus grapheme and place each word in a section of the grid.
- Play 'Three is a Row' (noughts and crosses) with the child. A word can only be covered with a nought or a cross when the word is read correctly.

GPC Flashcards

At Colburn use the Little Wandle flashcards:



Phase 2 flashcards (pink) have the grapheme on one side and the same grapheme with an associated image on the other side.

Phase 3 flashcards (blue) have the grapheme on one side and an associated image with a fun mnemonic on the other side.

Phase 5 flashcards (gold) have the grapheme on one side and all of its phonemes alongside example words on the other side.

Phoneme Frames

Phoneme frames can be used to support segmenting for spelling across all phases. They should be introduced in EYFS with magnetic letters and as children develop they should be encouraged to write the graphemes.

One grapheme goes into each box. This could mean a box has more than one letter in.

- Before using the phoneme frames prepare a list of words that you want pupils to write, with a key grapheme and others that they are confident with.
- Tell pupils the word.
- Segment the word three times.
- Pupils then write the word into the frame.

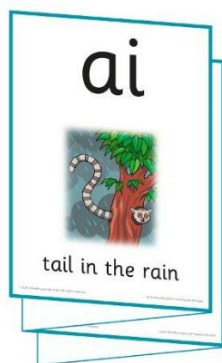
Some examples;

ch	i	n
----	---	---

sh	ee	p
----	----	---

GPC Charts

For fidelity to our chosen SSP programme, the following Frieze, ‘Grapheme Chart’ and ‘Grow the Code Chart’ are used. These are displayed in EYFS and in KS1 and the charts are also used printed out small enough that children can have them on their tables during lessons for easy access for spelling. In EYFS pupils are taught how to use the ‘Grapheme Chart’ through literacy/phonics sessions and within provision. Pupils should become confident and independent when using these for writing.



Grapheme chart														Phase 2 and 3			
s		p	n	m	d	g	c	r	h	b	f	l	j	v			
s	t	p	n	m	d	g	c	r	h	b	f	l	j	v			
ss	tt	pp	nn	mm	dd	gg	ck	rr		bb	ff	ll		vv			
							cc										
		y	z	qu				ng	nk	a	e						
w	x	y	z	qu	ch	sh	th	ng	nk	a	e	i	o	u			
			zz														
			s														
																	
ai	ee	igh	oa	oo	oo	ar	or	ur	er	ow	oi	ear	air				

The frieze and the Grapheme Chart are used in Reception where the children learn up to the end of Phase 3.

Grow the code												Phase 2, 3 and 5		
s ss c se ce st sc	t tt	p pp	n nn kn gn	m mm mb	d dd	g gg	c ck cc ch	r rr wr	h hh	b bb	f ff ph	l ll le al	j jg dge ge	v vv ve
w wh	x	y	z zz s ze	qu	ch ture	sh ch ti ssi ci	th ng nk	ng nk	a a	e ea	i iy	o o ou	u u ou	
ai ay a a-e igh y ey	ee ea e-e ie ey	igh ie i-e y	oa o-e oe ow	oo ur u-e ow ui	ue u-e eer	oo u' oul	ar a' al'	or ow ou oor al a oar ore	ur er ir or	ow ou	ol oy	eer ere eer	air are ere ear	su si

The Grow the Code Chart is used from when the children begin learning Phase 5 in Year One (the second half of the Autumn Term).

For transition and to support the lower ability children in Year Two, this is also displayed in Year Two.

The Grow the Code Chart is also used throughout school to support children with spelling. It is not exclusive to KS1. For the children who need it, it is printed at either A4 or A5 size depending on the child's needs.

Assessment

All pupils' knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondence, their ability to read decodable words, and their recognition of tricky words will be regularly assessed through formative assessment in phonic lessons and using the phonic assessment tracker every six weeks.

The half termly assessment is completed on Little Wandle's 'Phonic Assessment Tracker' for all pupils working on phases 2-5 by the class teacher. Within 72 hours of submitting the data, a report is formed and can be accessed by the Phonics Leader. This is then monitored and used to identify children who are falling

behind or are at risk of falling behind. From the data, the Phonics Leader can identify the children who are in the lowest 20% of the cohort and therefore require interventions. The Phonics Leader quickly shares this information with the class teacher and follows up on any lines of enquiry that may arise.

In Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 at the end of each week there is a review session which recaps the learning. There are also whole review weeks (pre-planned and bespoke review weeks to address gaps identified by the class teacher's ongoing formative assessment).

Children identified in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 as in danger of falling behind are immediately identified and daily 'keep up' sessions are put in place – these sessions follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

In Reception and year 1, the children are assessed at the end of every half term using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessment tracker.

At appropriate intervals (from January) children in Year 1 will complete a past phonics screening test. This will identify those children at risk of not passing the test and effective interventions can be put in place.

If teachers are concerned about the progress of a child in their class, please consider the points below;

- Can they give a rhyming word?
- Can they hold a steady beat?
- Can they hear/say initial sounds?
- Can they orally blend?
- Do they understand how to segment?
- Can they read some tricky words to enable fluency?
- Are they stuck on a particular phase/particular phoneme(s)? Children find phase 3 phonemes particularly tricky, investigating if they can identify these within words may prove useful.
- Have they got momentum when blending or do they need some simple blending practice as an intervention?
- Do they have a strategy to blend words with more than 1 syllable?
- Are they able to identify split digraphs within words?

Children in year 1 complete the statutory Phonics Screening Check in the summer term. Children who do not meet standard in the Phonics Screening Check in Y1, will complete this in Y2. Support continues to be put in place for these children.

Supporting the Lowest 20%

At Colburn we have the opinion of 'keep up, not catch up.' This relies on a rigorous assessment for learning approach both during phonic lessons and through the 6 weekly assessment. Those pupils who are identified to be struggling or not keeping up will be provided with daily one to one support to enable them to keep up with whole class teaching.

Using a one to one approach ensures the intervention is tailored to the pupils' needs and abilities providing specific learning.

When working with those pupils that have been identified as needing more support think about;

- Using a quiet place with no distractions.
- Appropriate furniture at the correct level for the pupil.
- A well-lit room.

Resources

- These should be in line with the resources used across schools to ensure a consistent and familiar approach.
- Prepared resources that match each session.
- A copy of their assessments that identifies the pupil's current 'gaps' and the next steps in their learning.

Monitoring

- Each child should have a record kept of their interventions. These are kept in a 'Case Study' folder which should be easily accessible for any adult who should need access to it at any given time.
- Clear outcomes should be planned for. What do you want the pupil to know by the end of the session?
- Regular assessment that is fed back to the Phonics and English Lead. Particularly when concerns are held about a child's lack of progress.

The lowest 20% children should change as pupils make progress.

Reading in EYFS and Key Stage 1

Group reading books progress according to their phonic content. Books have been organised to match phases and sets outlined by Little Wandle. Each book has been placed into a phase closely linked with the phonemes contained, ensuring phoneme content progresses through the reading scheme.

Pupils stay on these books until they are a moderately fluent reader, when they will then begin reading other banded and self-chosen books. In each phase, books progress by introducing new phonemes and revisiting those already known. Pupils' reading books have been selected to match their phonic ability. This is to ensure pupils can read the book rather than having to sound out every grapheme, increasing fluency.

Guided Reading Year 1 and EYFS

All pupils should be listened to three times a week, using the three part read. This ensures comprehension and decoding are taught separately to avoid cognitive overload. Pupils read the same book for three days to increase fluency and understanding.

Teachers should use the planning sheets to plan objectives and questions to ask the pupils. The same planning sheet should be used for the three days. Pupils are assessed against the objectives using a traffic light system.

	Word reading		Comprehension
1.	Give the sound when shown any Phase 2 grapheme, securing first the starter letters s, a, t, p, i, n (L&S Phase 2)	A	Begin to be aware of the way stories are structured (L:it)
2	Find, from a display, any Phase 2 grapheme when given the sound (L&S Phase 2)	B	Suggest how the story might end (L:R)
3	Orally blend and segment CVC words (L&S Phase 2)	C	Listen to stories with increasing attention and recall (L:R)
4	Blend and segment in order to read (using magnetic letters) VC words such as: if, am, on, up and silly names such as ip, ug and ock (L&S Phase 2)	D	Describe main story settings, events and principal characters (L:R)
5	Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities (L:R)	E	Show interest in illustrations and print in books and print in the environment (L:R)
6	Show an awareness of rhyme and alliteration (L:R)	F	Look at books independently (L:R)
7	Recognise rhythm in spoken words (L:R)	G	Handle books carefully (L:R)
8	Listen to and join in with stories and poems, one-to-one and also in small groups (L:R)	H	Know information can be relayed in the form of print (L:R)
9	Join in with repeated refrains and anticipate key events and phrases in rhymes and stories (L:R)	I	Hold books the correct way up and turns pages (L:R)
10	Recognises familiar words and signs such as own name and advertising logos (L:R)	J	Know that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom (L:R)

Date	Title of Book	Focus for this session	Children's Names & specific comments to inform future provision			

The planning sheets have been linked to Letters and Sounds (which was revised for Little Wandle). The phases match the pupil's level of reading.

CLPE Reading Scale	Phonic Phase and KS2 Year Group	EYFS Stage
Beginning Reader	Phase 1	EYFS 30-50
	Phase 1/2	EYFS 30-50
Early Reader	Phase 2	EYFS 40-60
	Phase 3	ELG
Developing Reader	Phase 4/5	
	Phase 4/5	
	Phase 5/6	
	Phase 5/6	
Moderately Fluent Reader	Phase 6	
	Phase 6	
	Phase 6	
	Phase 6	

Before sharing the book with pupils:

- Pick out key graphemes and write on small card/sticky notes.
- Pick out the tricky words in the book and write these on small cards/sticky notes.
- Pick out any key vocabulary that pupils may find challenging and write on small cards/sticky notes.
- Where children are being exposed to new vocabulary, photographs/images should be used to help children to understand the word.

Before reading the book;

- Read the title.
- Read through the pre-prepared phonemes, tricky words and vocabulary. Remind the pupils that these are going to be in the book and leave them on table for them to refer to.

Read 1

This read is a focus on decoding for reading rather than comprehension and understanding.

- Pupils read at their own pace and the adult to listen as they read the book.
- Ensure correct articulation and blending.
- Encourage and support pupils to re-read the sentences after they have blended words.
- Encourage pupils to read repeating words without blending. (Remind them they have already read the word on the previous page/before reading the book etc).

Read 2

This read is a focus on prosody (using expression).

- Pupils follow along with their finger whilst adult models the expression. Then pupils have a go at doing this (same sentence).
- Discuss the punctuation and how this might change our voice. Eg going up at the end when asking a question.
- Another opportunity for pupils to practice blending but should be at a quicker pace, recognising some of the words.
- Pupils may work in pairs to model and add expression into their reading.

Read 3

This read has a focus on comprehension. By this read the pupils should be familiar with the words and should be reading the text more fluently.

Ask pupils;

- What they think about what is happening?
- Do they understand what they are reading?
- Open ended questions that involve all pupils.
- Character's thoughts and feelings.

In Year 2, children should be given written comprehension questions to answer. Teachers must use their assessments to decide when it is appropriate for a child to begin written comprehension questions. Children should be competent at answering most oral comprehension questions before they are given written questions. Each child should have a 'Group Reading comprehension book' to record these in.

Home Readers

All pupils should be given the same book that they have read in school that week (during Group Reading) to take home on a Friday. The book is to be sent home alongside their 'Reading Record' book. Parents are encouraged to comment in the book about their child's reading. Teachers should read these comments and respond accordingly.

Inside the front cover of each reading book there is useful information for the reader and the listener. Phonemes that are included in the book as well as high frequency and tricky words. Ideally, when pupils come across these words they should not be blending them but reading them fluently. It also informs the pupil and whoever is listening to them which words cannot be decoded because they are tricky words and do not follow phonic patterns.

Alongside their home reading books, the children take home a 'love of reading' book. This is a book chosen by each child to take home. Unlike the reading books, the 'love of reading' book does not need to be at a decodable level for the child as they can take it home to have an adult read it to them. The purpose of the children borrowing these books from school is the promotion of reading/sharing books for enjoyment and to develop positive attitudes towards literature and reading.

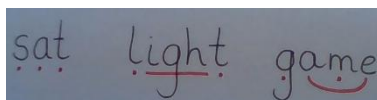
Shared Vocabulary

Phonemes = are the smallest unit of speech-sounds which make up a word. If you change a phoneme in a word, you would change the meaning. For example, there are 3 phonemes in the word **sit**. If you changed the phoneme **s** for **f**, you have a new word, **fit**. If you change the phoneme **t** in **fit** for **sh**, you have a new word, **fish**.

Graphemes = are the written representation of sounds.

CVC = a consonant-vowel-consonant word, such as **cat**, **pin** or **top**. You may also come across the abbreviation **CCVC** for consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words such as **clap** and **from**. Also **CVCC** for words such as **mask** and **belt**.

Sound buttons (not 'dots and dashes') e.g.



Mantras

Hand to ear	Teaching strategy for children to repeat after the teacher.
Speedy sounds	Process of recapping previously taught GPCS.
Pronunciation Phrase	A memorable phrase used to support the children in saying phonemes correctly.
Formation phrase	A memorable phrase used to support the children in forming the letter correctly using directional vocabulary.
Shuffle time	Used to shuffle GPCs during teaching.
Copy me	Teacher instructs children to copy them.
Watch me	Teacher instructs children to watch them.
Segmenting fingers	Teaching strategy to use fingers to segment a word.
Sound talk	Teaching strategy used for oral blending.

Sound talk	Teaching strategy used for oral blending.
Tricky bit	Used to identify tricky part of a tricky word (the part that cannot be decoded).
Grapheme spotter	Used to identify new GPC amongst previously taught GPCS.
Whisper blending	Teaching strategy to support children to bridge the gap between sounding and blending aloud and doing the process silently 'in their head'.
Chunk it up	To break up a longer word and read it one part (chunk) at a time, to avoid being overwhelmed and to ease the process of blending.
2/3 letters – 1 sound	Teaching strategy used to explain digraphs and trigraphs.
Catchphrase	A type of mnemonic in the form of a memorable (often funny) phrase. Generally used in some of the later GPCs learned, where a picture alone might not give enough of a 'hook'.