



Thames Ditton Infant School

Phonics and Early Reading Policy 2023/25

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Phonics and Early Reading Policy



Context

At Thames Ditton Infant school, we believe that phonic knowledge and the skill of decoding are fundamental when teaching children to read and spell. Children will leave our school with a love of reading, being able to read with fluency and spell words accurately. Our children learn to read in order that they can read to learn, and we enhance our curriculum with high quality, engaging texts. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

All of our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in the very early stages of 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 our school.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Thames Ditton Infant School, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of phonics lessons 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.

Comprehension

Reading is valued as a crucial life skill at our school. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. 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.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a shared approach to leadership, with our Reading Leader working closely with Year Group Leaders to drive the early reading programme in our school. Leaders are highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and together they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Implementation

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: teaching begins early in 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 3 GPCs, and 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 Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by fully trained adults. Keep-up lessons match the structure of 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 additional phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:
 - are taught by fully trained adults to small groups of around six children
 - use books matched to the children’s secure phonic knowledge
 - 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
 - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.
- These sessions start when children are able to blend taught sounds. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practise in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.
- In Year 2, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

Home reading

- The Big Cat phonics decodable reading practice books read in school are taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
- Additional phonically decodable books, matched to the children’s secure phonic knowledge, are also taken home for children to be exposed to a wider range of texts.
- Children also choose a ‘Reading for Pleasure’ book for parents to share and read to children.
- We use the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents’ resources](#) to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops.

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.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- All teachers and support staff in our school have 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 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 uses the audit tool and prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; summative data is used to identify children who need additional support and any 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.

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Thames Ditton Infant School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has inviting book spaces that encourage a love for reading. We curate the books in class and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- During continuous provision, children have access to the reading areas every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children have a home reading record. Parents use these to record comments to share with school. School can use these books as a tool for communication regarding reading, including outcomes from assessments.
- Each class has regular visits to our school library.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (eg. Book Week, book fairs, author visits and workshops).

Impact

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
 - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings
 - throughout the week in any phonics related activities children complete during continuous provision.
- **Summative assessment** is used:
 - every six weeks to assess progress, identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, identify any children needing additional support and plan the Keep-up support that they need
 - by SLT 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
 - to inform parents of children's next steps and phonic sounds to practise.

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 keep-up and catch-up

- Children access Keep-up groups are assessed every three weeks to monitor progress within these.
- Children in Year 2 are assessed through their teacher's ongoing formative assessment as well as through the half-termly *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* summative assessments.