



Phonics & Reading Policy

November 2025

This policy aims to share our curriculum intent for reading. It aims to show how we implement the teaching of early reading, comprehension and implement a broad range of reading opportunities to encourage development. Moreover, it will show we monitor attainment and progress to ensure our children are developing their progress in reading as well as their love of reading.

Intent and Aims

Phonics

At Birtley House School we use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Programme to teach Phonics and Reading. We believe that reading is a key life skill that is extremely important especially in children's early development. Little Wandle progression teaches children sounds and blending, tackling tricky words and develops reading comprehension skills. We have chosen Little Wandle Letters and Sounds revised as our schools systematic and synthetic phonics programme due to its comprehensive and consistent approach. Phonics is crucial for all areas of the curriculum therefore we dedicate time for all children at Birtley House to have daily phonics/fluency lessons. We also have a strong focus on language development as we understand the importance for children to develop their speaking and listening skills.

Comprehension

At Birtley House we understand there are two main components to learning to read: Word decoding and comprehension. Alongside us teaching phonics we also dedicate time to developing reading comprehension. We use the reading practice sessions from Little Wandle Letters and Sounds revised to develop key reading skills: prosody, comprehension and tackling unfamiliar vocabulary.

Implementation

Daily Phonics lessons for children working on Phase 2-5

All children are placed in differentiated phonics groups determined by their placement assessment at the beginning of the programme. The children determined to be working on Phase 2-5 will work on progressing with these during the Phonics sessions. These groups have a minimum of one Teacher and one TA, all staff are trained in the Little Wandle programme to deliver high quality and impactful sessions.

Our daily phonics lessons last for 25 minutes at the beginning of the children's Literacy lessons. We follow an adapted version of the Little Wandle progression grid to ensure all children are able to access the programme. Our programme has been adapted to ensure our children can learn at the correct pace and ensure their working memory is not overloaded. We really focus on the learning of new phonemes and the skills of blending and segmenting. The children are then prepared to develop their learning of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs).

Daily Fluency lessons for children who have achieved Phase 5

'Fluency' is a programme for confident readers who have demonstrated they have achieved all 5 phases. This programme develops a range of reading skills and uses a wide range of engaging chapter books to do so. Using the 'complete the code' chart children should be able to fully decode these books, that range from Levels 1 -15. Children start at Level 1 and progress through the range of diverse and current chapter books.

Children in the 'Fluency' group have these lessons at the same time as the children completing the Phase 2 -5 phonics programme. This class is delivered by a trained teacher and TA. The lessons follow three structured steps of: pre-reading activities, independent reading and after reading activities. Each Chapter has its own activities and works on children's accuracy, automaticity, comprehension and prosody.

Teaching reading

Reading is taught alongside the phonics learning using books matched to the Little Wandle Letters and sounds progression. The books follow the same sequence of sounds progression that the children are working on in their phases.

Each reading session has a clear focus and is separated into the 3 key reading practice sessions: decoding, prosody and comprehension. These sessions are taught within the dedicated time for phonics and are usually in small groups and led by the class teacher. Each session has a clear structured focus so the children's working memory is not overloaded. Children also have timetabled time to read further books 1-1 with a teacher or TA a minimum of once a week in school. Teachers will further practise these reading skills during 1-1 reading time.

Home reading

The decodable reading practice book used in the reading practice session is sent home at the end of the week to practice. We encourage parents to listen to their child decode the book and engage in comprehension questions the following week after practicing in class.

Children also take home a pleasure book of their choice from the school library. Their 'reading for pleasure book' is of a similar level to the phase they are working on. These books are from a range of schemes however they have been matched carefully to the Little Wandle scheme. It is encouraged children attempt to read these to their parent/carer at home as well.

Parents and children are also encouraged to read any literature at home as any exposure to books and reading is beneficial. Communications about reading between school and home are written in children's reading records.

Ensuring needs are met and staff training

Every teacher and TA have been trained to teach the Little Wandle scheme and received training on the adaptations to meet the need of the pupils. All use the same language, routines, resources to ensure children can manage their cognitive load. All staff are equipped and trained to adapt to children's needs for all lessons within the school day and will therefore implement this within phonics lessons also. Lesson template, prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure teachers are consistent and lessons have a predicted structure which supports all children.

Children who may need extra support for phonics will have extra phonics sessions using the SEND adapted programme from Little Wandle or the Rapid Catch-up 7+.

Ensuring reading for Pleasure

We value reading for pleasure as a key area to develop reading, as a school we aim to develop reading for pleasure by:

- Reading to the children every day, we carefully choose books to expose children to a wide range of literature. This is timetabled for all classes to read a class book for 10 minutes at the end of the school day. We then encourage dialogue around the book to enable them to engage in discussions around a range of texts.
- Every classroom has an interesting and engaging book corner to promote reading throughout the school day. Children have free access to the book corner at certain

points of the day. The book corners are frequently reviewed and changed based on children's interests and on current topics.

- Children have timetabled sessions to be able to use the school library. The school library is full of a wide range of books that promote diversity, breadth of knowledge and love of reading.
- Parents are encouraged to bring 'reading for pleasure' into their homes so children can experience this away from school also.
- British values and SMSC: The books children explore in their class reading time as well as through a range of lessons enable children to engage in their understanding of British values. The books they study reflect diversity and inclusivity. Children also are able to explore moral and social issues through a range of 'reading for pleasure' books.

Parent Training

Each year we hold a parent training session to ensure parents are confident in supporting their child's reading at home. We also feel it is important parents are aware of the way we teach phonics at Birtley House to ensure they are knowledgeable about their child's development in phonics and reading. A parent information leaflet and presentation are also uploaded to the school website so resources are readily available to access throughout the year. Parents communicate with staff about a child's reading through reading records and updates on phonics progress is shared through parents' evenings at points across the year.

Impact

Both formative and summative assessment are used to monitor progress and to develop children's skills and understanding.

Formative Assessment

Assessment for learning is used daily within the lessons to identify children's progress and the support they require. There is a weekly 'Review' lesson which is used to identify gaps and review GPCs and words the children may have found challenging.

Summative Assessment

Children started the Little Wandle scheme by taking a 'Placement assessment' determine which phase they would be working at.

Every term, in line with assessment week, the children complete a phonics assessment from the Little Wandle scheme to monitor progress. This is used to identify any children needing additional support. As our children learn phonics based on their ability and not age, we do not sit the Phonics Screening Check.

Monitoring

Throughout the year the effectiveness of the phonics programme will be monitored. This is through: formal lesson observations, learning walks, training and CPD for staff and regular modelling, pupil interviews, staff questionnaires, and staff coaching sessions. The Phonics lead will receive regular high-quality training from Little Wandle which will be used to coach staff.