**Phonics and early reading policy**

**The context of our school**

At St Michael’s, we are aware of the difficulties and limitations facing the families in our community and strive to provide an education that ensures all children in our care are supported and challenged to reach their full potential. We strive to ensure our attendance levels stay above national average and keep in close contact with families who struggle to get their children to school. Where this is a concern, as a school we put steps in place to ensure these children are in attendance, so that they do not miss out on the opportunities provided to them in our setting. Reading sessions take place throughout the day across our school, but where there are late arrivals, we ensure these children are not deprived and have opportunities to catch up on missed content. Our Pupil Premium team and SENDCOs meet weekly to discuss the children in our care and put steps in place to ensure the health, wellbeing and progress of these children is at the forefront of our daily interactions. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

**Intent**

**Phonics (reading and spelling)**

At St Michael’s, 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*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in 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 St Michael’s, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson 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**

At St Michael’s, we value reading as a crucial life skill. 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 Reading Leaders who drive the early reading programme in our school. They are highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

**Implementation**

**Foundations for phonics in Early Years**

* 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 and poems
  + learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
  + activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
  + attention to high-quality language
* We ensure Early Years children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

**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 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 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 a fully trained adult. 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 daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 or 3 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.
* If any child in Year 3 to 6 has gaps in their phonic knowledge when reading or writing, we plan phonics ‘catch-up’ lessons to address specific reading/writing gaps. These short, sharp lessons last 10-20 minutes and take place at least three times a week.

**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 a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
  + use books matched to the children’s secure phonic knowledge using 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 (supported by the Reading Leaders), 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

In Year 2 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

* In Reception, reading practice starts in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.

**Home reading**

There are two types of books send home each week:

* The decodable reading practice book is taken home, once they have read it 3 times in school, to ensure success is shared with the family.
* Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. The children choose these themselves from our school libraries.
* 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.

**Ensuring consistency and pace of progress**

* All adults that deliver early reading sessions, 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 adults all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
* The Reading Leaders and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and 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 St Michael’s 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 share these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
* In Reception and Year 1, children have access to the reading corner every day in their enhanced provision time and the books are continually refreshed, including rotating of topic linked texts.
* Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and they are regularly monitored by the class teacher.
* 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.
* The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. Here they can enjoy the experience of exploring books in a calm and quiet setting, as well as choose books to take home and share with their families.
* 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 progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

* [**Assessment for learning**](https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LS-KEY-GUIDANCE-GETTING-STARTED-ASSESSMENT-FINAL.pdf) 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**](https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/my-letters-and-sounds/assessment-tools/) 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 Reading Leaders and 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.

**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 and 3 are assessed through their teacher’s ongoing formative assessment as well as through the half-termly *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* summative assessments.
* Children in Year 4 to 6 are assessed through their teacher’s ongoing formative assessment and the Reading Leaders are notified of any concerns regarding specific children.