



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed

...to be the best 'me' I can be.



Phonics Policy 2021/22

At Birches First School we recognise the importance of secure phonological understanding as a key factor in developing skills of early reading and writing. As children begin to access the world of the written word and begin to develop a love of reading with growing understanding and a widening range of texts, they begin to express themselves, thus becoming more independent readers and writers.

Aims

To provide pupils with a clear understanding of how the alphabet works for reading and spelling;

To enable our pupils to become fluent and confident readers with a strong phonological awareness;

To develop pupils' sight vocabulary to aid fluent reading;

To enable our children to become confident and independent writers with accurate application of phonic skills and understanding;

To provide opportunities for repetition and consolidation so that spelling and reading become automatic;

Teaching and Learning of Phonics

At Birches First School from Nursery onwards, children participate in daily Phonic Sessions. Each session will involve a range of activities and experiences to practise and consolidate skills and understanding with a strong focus on the application of phonics to the contexts of reading **and** spelling for writing.

Phonic skills are applied throughout the wider curriculum in every year group, skilfully supported by staff. Throughout the curriculum, children are encouraged to apply their phonic skills and knowledge of spelling rules in their work using spelling application books in which they try themselves before asking for an adult to support them with the spelling.

We have implemented the 'Little Wandle' phonics scheme after researching various approved schemes ensuring that we make an informed decision which is right for our children.

Our youngest children in Nursery develop secure foundations in key phonological skills through games and activities which engage and capture the children's imagination to begin to make recognition between sounds and objects which begin with focus sounds.

The most important aspects of Foundations for Phonics to develop in the nursery are:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems with children

From the start of nursery, children should have lots of opportunities to engage with books that fire their imagination and interest, as well as immerse them in language they would not otherwise be exposed to. They should also be provided with a range of high-quality books to choose and read (in their own words), as well as to share with an adult. Children will benefit from reading both as part of a class or key group and one-to-one with an adult.

- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes

Singing a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes must be part of the daily routine. Children need to experience a rich repertoire of nursery rhymes and action rhymes that include multi-sensory experiences, such as action rhymes in which children have to add claps, knee pats or foot stamps, or move in a particular way. They need to build a stock of rhymes through hearing them in different contexts.

- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending

Oral blending is the breaking down of words into phonemes (the smallest units of sound). It helps children identify and hear phonemes in words and blend them together to read a word. It is important that children have plenty of experience of listening to adults modelling oral blending and joining in with oral blending activities before they are introduced to grapheme- phoneme correspondence. This ensures they are 'tuned into' sounds when they begin Phase 2. Within a nursery setting, this should be a short daily activity. Oral blending will continue into Phase 2 and beyond.

- attention to high-quality language with children

Staff model and use standard English at all time, talking to children in full sentences. They add more description to their own speech. For example, saying 'Please could you pass me the large, blue spoon with the wooden handle?' this exposes your child to more words than just saying 'Please could you pass me the spoon?' Staff ensure that children are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary spending time explaining the meaning and context to help children understand what others are saying, to talk and write in an engaging way, and to better understand the world around them. Staff ask questions about stories. For example, 'Is Buzz helpful to Woody? Is the Gruffalo really scary? Do you think the mouse is a clever mouse? How do you know?' From nursery onwards, we encourage your child to answer questions in developed phrases rather than in one or two words.

From Reception onwards, children are exposed and taught phase 2-4. The children are taught through engaging sessions with various opportunities to consolidate their phonics learning through play. Children in Reception and Year 1 additionally participate in small high quality reading sessions which enables children to practise the phonics skills acquired each week.

When teaching children new sounds, time and care is taken to ensure that the 'pure' sound is modelled and used.

In Year 1, children consolidate their phase 2-4 learning and move onto phase 5. The Little Wandle scheme ensures that children are always participating in daily phonics sessions.

Children are exposed to letters written in different fonts/styles to reflect the wide range of text in the world around us as well as becoming confident at recognising the letter names and associated sounds of both lowercase and capital letters.

In Key Stage 2 children either continue to receive phonic input / interventions or move onto the Year 3 / 4 Spelling curriculum.

Progression / Expectations by Year group (according to the Little Wandle Scheme);

Nursery – Developing Phonological awareness.

Reception – Phase 2 / 3 / 4.

Year 1 – Revisit Phase 3 and 4 and move onto Phase 5 (Autumn 2)

Year 2 – Revisit Phase 5
Teach Y2 Spelling Curriculum – Birches Spelling Scheme

Year 3 – Teach Y3 Spelling Curriculum – Birches Spelling Scheme

Year 4 – Teach Y4 Spelling Curriculum – Birches Spelling Scheme

Vocabulary:

Hand to ear	Teaching strategy for chn to repeat after T.
Speedy sounds	Process of recapping previously taught GPCS.
Pronunciation phrase	A memorable phrase used to support the children in saying the letter correctly using directional vocabulary.
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	T instructs children to copy them
Watch me	T instructs children to watch them
Segmenting fingers	Teaching strategy to use fingers to segment a word
Sound talk	Teaching strategy used for oral blending
Tricky bit	Used to identify 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".

Assessment of Phonics

Ongoing formative assessments are made during daily sessions and used to adapt and plan for future learning/next steps. Children are also assessed at the end of each phase (Summative assessments).

Children in Year 3 and 4 are tested termly against their Year group Spellings list.

In Key Stage 1, children have a weekly spelling test following our Birches Spelling Scheme.

Children in Year 1 and 2 children who did not meet the standard in Year 1 are taught the skill of decoding unfamiliar 'nonsense' words whilst also being taught to understand the application of such skills to reading and writing.

Children are taught in whole class phonics.

In June each year, children in Year 1 (and those Year 2 children who did not meet the standard) are assessed as part of the statutory Phonic Screen Assessment. This assessment is carried out by the class teacher.

Interventions

Where children are identified as not making expected progress or working below ARE, they will be assessed using the Little Wandle Keep Up interventions. Teachers will:

- Use assessment for learning and assessment results to identify children that require daily individual keep-up lessons.
- Use the flow charts 'Identifying for Keep-up in Reception/Year 1' to help work out exactly what support each child needs.
- Will not stop teaching new GPCs within class sessions to the children who have keep-up teaching.

Some children may have more specific, individual areas of need within phonics which would be targeted through individual interventions/support and may form part of an ISP.