

# A Policy for Teaching Phonics and Early Reading at Lowercroft Primary School

## What is Phonics?

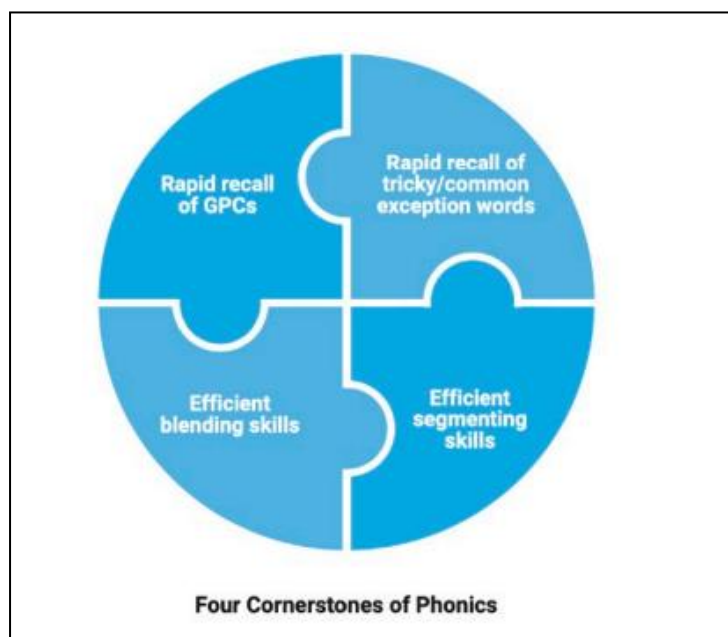
Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. The Department for Education, (DfE), establishes the core criteria for effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching programmes. Using phonics programmes, children are taught to read and write using phonics, which is by directly linking phonemes (sounds in words) and graphemes (the symbols used to represent them).

Phonics is an important feature of the curriculum and is considered the best way to teach children to read.

## How We Deliver Our Phonics Teaching

At Lowercroft, we use the DfE accredited, Junior Learning (JL) Letters and Sounds as our systematic, synthetic phonics programme (SSP). It is high quality and robust in its purpose. With a clear, structured progression through the programme, it allows all of our pupils to meet or exceed the expected standard. Our overarching aim is to help all children become fluent readers by the age of seven.

The JL Letters and Sounds approach combines rigorous progression with engaging learning materials. We believe that children learn best when they are enjoying their learning and that this comes from a mix of bright, fun and engaging lessons and resources within a clear and systematic approach that builds on children's skills daily.



The structure of every phonics lesson follows a familiar five-part structure to ensure that the four cornerstones of phonics are covered. During our phonics lessons children will repeat the elements from the four cornerstones of phonics to ensure that they have rapid and automatic recall of GPCs and tricky/common exception words. Each day, they will experience blending and segmenting activities to allow regular practice of these core

## The Five Part Lesson Structure

**Revisit & Review** previously taught GPCs and tricky/common exception words.

**Teach** new GPC and tricky/common exception words.

**Practise** blending and segmenting words using the new GPCs.

**Apply** read or write a caption or sentence using taught GPCs and tricky/common exception words.

**Assess** children's learning against the lesson objectives and create an action plan.

JL Letters and Sounds uses alliterative and rhyming captions to help the children remember and retain the phonemes taught and these also help the children with SEND to commit new learning to their long term memory.

To support our phonics teaching at home, reception and Y1 children have Sounds and Words Books to which new GPC's and CEW's are added at the appropriate weeks. This helps to consolidate what has been taught in school and supports parents when listening to their children read. These books follow the same format in both year groups which encourages a cohesive whole-school approach.

As part of our wider SSP provision, there are also follow-up activities using JL's Read/Write decodables that the children can complete independently, in pairs or in groups and these relate to the week's learning.

## Reading Phonetically Decodable Books

Our phonics lessons are further supported by JL's decodable reading books and these form the 'spine' of our reading scheme. These books are used for children to access independently in order to apply the skills they have learnt in their phonics lessons.

Decodable reading books are also provided for both guided and home reading. These are carefully matched to both JL's Letters and Sounds progression map and the children's phonic level. The books include titles from the Big Cat, Phonics Bug and Oxford Reading Tree schemes amongst others.

## Reading Progression in Reception and KS1

In the **reception** year children will read books following the JL Letters and Sounds progression document (see appendix 1). This will mean they take home reading books to practise the new learning from the previous week. Children working below ARE will read books from the phonic stage at which they are securely working.

In **Y1**, the children who show greater depth at the end of Phase 5 assessments, (90% or above), will be assessed at orange book band level, using a running record then adjustments made to determine the correct band. These children will take home a reading book at their book band level in addition to one which practises the previous week's new learning in phonics. Children working below ARE (70% and below), will continue to take home books at the phonic phase in which they are secure. The class teacher will then be responsible for deciding when a child is ready to be assessed for greater challenge with a book banded book. Guided reading will follow the previous week's phonics teaching whenever possible.

In Y2, all children working at ARE will be assessed by running record during the first few weeks of the autumn term and move to the appropriate colour band. Children who have not achieved ARE will continue to read books from the phonic phase in which they are secure. Once secure at Phase 5, a running record will be used to determine a suitable colour band for reading. Guided reading in Y2 follows the colour banding system. Children working below ARE will have individual texts selected by the class teacher.

## **Timetabling/Structure**

Phonics is taught daily to all children in reception and key stage 1.

In reception, phonics sessions will increase in length over the year. By the end of reception, children spend about 45 minutes a day on reading and phonics activities, consolidating previous learning, learning new content and practising and applying what they have learnt. This will consist of a mixture of carpet time, guided reading and other follow-up activities. Phonics will also form part of their continuous provision for children to access following their discrete phonics lesson.

In years 1 and 2, phonics teaching sessions will last about half an hour each day. Children who are working below ARE in Y2 and did not pass the PSC will repeat Phases 5 and 5.5 with Y1 and be taught the Phase 6 curriculum in booster sessions.

## **Progression in Phonics** (See appendix1)

Throughout Phase1 of phonics teaching, young learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to use and discriminate between auditory, environmental and instrumental sounds through '7 Aspects.' Phase 1 is taught in nursery and pre-school settings in the year prior to starting school. This is a vital phase as it underpins learning throughout the teaching of Phases 2-6 at Lowercroft.

## **IMPACT**

### ***Assessment and Tracking***

Formative assessment takes place continually during both teaching sessions and independent application. In KS1, summative assessment takes place at the beginning of each half term and in Reception it takes place at the end of each phase in the programme. The assessment information is collated and added to a JL Letters and Sounds tracking document to show where the children are secure with their phonics learning. It is the responsibility of the Phonics Lead Teacher to collect the data and monitor the progress of the children in each cohort. Children who develop gaps in their knowledge can therefore be identified early and plans put in place to arrange support packages. Continuing assessment ensures their progress is then monitored.

Assessment information is also used to inform the ability groups the children are placed in for guided reading. This ensures that the correct level of book is chosen to meet the needs of the reader.

Transition meetings in Summer Term 2 include the transfer of phonic assessment information from each class. Moderation of results takes place at the end of each year group. The receiving teacher is involved in the moderation process and whenever possible in Summer Term 2, supports the delivery of phonics teaching with the children who will be joining them.

## ***INCLUSION/ INTERVENTION***

### ***Supporting the Lowest 20% Achievers***

Regular assessment is vital to ensure the early identification of children who may need extra support, either through interventions or during daily classroom teaching. Ideally, these children will take part in daily, highly structured interventions, which will normally include recapping or relearning missing GPCs and tricky/common exception words, whilst practising blending and segmenting skills. As soon as we identify any child who is struggling to succeed in phonics, provision will be put into place to close the gap.

JL Letters and Sounds supports these children by including additional sessions in the teacher's manuals for revising the first 44 GPCs. In Key Stage 2, children who have left KS1 without passing the PSC will continue to have phonics teaching using these revision sessions. 'Nessy,' is also used for those who need support with spelling.

### ***Extending and Challenging Fast Learners***

Regular assessment is also vital to ensure the early identification of children who may need us to challenge them further, either through extension activities or during daily classroom teaching.

## ***Year 1 Phonics Screening Check***

In the summer term, children in Year 1 will undertake the National Phonics Screening Check. This is an assessment carried out in school during which the children will be assessed on their ability to segment and blend a range of 40 real and 'alien' words. Alien words are a selection of phonetically decodable nonsense words. The words in this assessment gauge the children's understanding of the phonemes learnt and give the school the knowledge of where the gaps are. If the children are not secure in recognising, segmenting and blending these words and therefore do not pass the assessment, they will be offered further support as they enter Year 2 and will be able to repeat the assessment in the summer term of year 2. This assessment further allows us to put in specific and personal support for those children who require additional assistance. If a child does not meet the expected standard in Year 2, then phonics teaching and learning will be continued into Key Stage 2. If the child has not already been referred to the school SENCO this will be put in place at this point. The child can then be monitored and assessed for additional needs.

## ***Home Learning Expectations*** (See appendix 2 and 3)

Parental involvement is key in the acquisition of phonics and supports us in developing a cohesive whole-school approach. A phonics information evening for reception parents is held in the autumn term (see appendix 2), and there is a phonics evening for year 1 parents during the first few weeks of the new school year (appendix 3). During these sessions, we will share information on techniques, e.g. saying pure sounds and blending, and how to use the 'Sounds and Words' home books. Through these meetings we can help to ensure that parents and carers are using the same strategies at home as the children are learning in

school and they can support their child in committing new phoneme/grapheme correspondences to memory.

In addition to 'Sounds and Words' books, two reading books at the individual child's level are sent home weekly for parents to support their child's phonics/reading journey.

## **Phonics Training/CPD**

Whole staff meetings take place to explain how phonics is taught throughout Reception and Key Stage 1. The Phonics Lead ensures that all students, teachers and TA's who are new to the school have the relevant information and understanding. All teachers and teaching assistants are offered the opportunity to observe phonics teaching in year groups other than their own (in house CPD) to ensure all staff have a thorough understanding of the phonic phases from phase 2 through to phase 6. Training in JL Letters and Sounds is delivered by the author, Clare Shivan-Taylor through BEST TRUST.

### ***Reviewing this Policy:***

This policy was written by the phonics subject lead, Viv Barlow.

It was completed in January 2024 and will be reviewed on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026

**Its implementation is seen as the responsibility of all staff. Its use and effectiveness will be supported and monitored by the phonics subject leader, on behalf of the head teacher and governors.**

## APPENDIX

Appendix 1: [JL Letters and Sounds Progression Document](#)

Appendix 2: [Reception Phonics and Reading Evening](#)

Appendix 3: [Y1 Phonics Evening](#)

## GLOSSARY

<i>ARE</i>	Age related expectations
<i>CEW</i>	Common exception words
<i>GPC</i>	Grapheme/phoneme correspondence
<i>Phoneme</i>	The smallest of unit of sound in a word
<i>PSC</i>	Phonic Screening Check
<i>SEND</i>	Special educational needs and disabilities
<i>SENDCo</i>	Special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator