

Reading rationale at Notley Green Primary School

At Notley Green, we believe that English is a fundamental life skill; it develops the children's ability to communicate effectively - to listen, speak, read and write for a wide range of purposes. We believe that reading has an essential role across the curriculum and helps pupils' learning to be coherent and progressive.



Our intent

At Notley Green, we instil a love of reading for pleasure in all of our learners. We have a culture which reflects the importance of reading for all, where children are motivated to develop their fluency and comprehension ability by enjoying the intrinsic rewards brought by reading more challenging and complex texts.

Reading underpins the wider curriculum. It is through decoding and comprehending non-fiction texts that children's minds are opened to new knowledge and ideas, leaving them able to pursue their personal interests and passions. Our reading curriculum is structured such that by the end of a child's journey at Notley Green, they will have access to a toolkit of skills that enable them to be independent readers. It is our aim that every child leaves Notley Green a fluent, active reader.

Implementation and Impact

Implementation of early reading in EYFS and Key Stage 1

Our approach to early reading in Foundation and Key Stage 1 is built around our adherence to a structured, systematic synthetic phonics programme. From a child's first days at Notley Green, they will begin to develop phonemic awareness through daily phonics sessions which gradually build towards an hour of phonics instruction and practice per day.

Foundations for phonics

We recognise that the foundations of children's reading ability are laid in early childhood. However, children's exposure to language at home, and their consequent phonological awareness, can vary widely for many reasons. As a result, we work to assess children's phonological awareness and identify children requiring more support at the earliest possible stage in their reading journey. Early phonics sessions in Foundation are spent explicitly teaching phonological awareness (phase 1), and the whole-class teaching of phonics is planned for in line with the children's current phonic knowledge.

Phonics is built into every aspect of a child's experience in the Foundation classroom. As well as discrete daily phonics lessons, phonics tasks are built into our continuous provision offer for Foundation. The learning environment is centred on phonics and children are taught to make use of the graphemes and illustrations to assist them with decoding the sounds they have been taught.

The daily teaching of phonics – direct instruction

Our phonics sessions follow a robust teaching sequence which is designed to suit our understanding of how children's memory works. Sessions begin by revisiting prior learning and reviewing what we already know, which transfers children's short-term memories to their long-term memory.

Following the review phase, the teacher models the new learning for the session, which is appropriately chunked to account for the children's developing working memories. The children then have opportunities to practise using the new knowledge in a structured task with assistance from classroom staff, before finally being given the opportunity to independently apply what they have learned. Our phonics lessons are designed to fit the "I do, We do, You do" schema for gradually reducing the pupil's reliance on adults.

We understand that it is necessary for children to practise encoding as the inverse of decoding. Our daily phonics sessions will always incorporate some degree of writing so that children are able to apply their phonemic knowledge in both reading and writing contexts.

1:1 reading

In Foundation, our children read to a classroom adult once a week. Reading with children enables Foundation staff to complete a half-termly 1:1 phonic assessment to inform future planning and intervention groups. We use Bug Club Phonics books, matched to the Letters and Sounds teaching sequence, as our main reading books in Foundation. These books are matched to each child's level of phonic understanding, and the children will take them home to reinforce the learning they have done in school.

Focused reading in Key Stage 1 – direct instruction

Our Key Stage 1 children take part in daily whole-class reading sessions. In these sessions, they explore a variety of texts that a child working at age-related expectations for their year group would not ordinarily be able to independently access. Texts are extended or adapted as appropriate to allow children to read at their own level.

As the children explore a new text, our Key Stage 1 teachers challenge their thinking using question stems that relate to the learning intention for that session. The skills developed through questioning in Key Stage 1 are vocabulary, retrieval, inference, sequencing, prediction and summarising.

Home and volunteer reading

Reading at home plays a vital role in developing children's ability to read and enjoyment of reading. It is therefore a school priority to ensure that parents and carers are involved in their child's reading journey outside of the classroom. Children record their reading at home in a reading diary, which is checked once a week by classroom staff. We support families who are not managing to read with their children through a constructive dialogue about the importance of reading at home and we offer them advice on how to fit reading into a busy home life. To further support parents, we offer parent events centred on developing children's reading and phonics at home.

We aim for all classes to receive weekly visits from a volunteer from our parent and carer community who listens to the children read. We are also heavily involved with local community bodies such as retirement homes for the purpose of making reading aloud an all-encompassing part of our school community. Our school takes part in locally-run reading challenges and we regularly host book fairs.

Implementation in Key Stage 2

Daily teaching of whole-class reading – direct instruction

By the start of Key Stage 2, we aim for children to be fluent readers, i.e. reading at a rate of 90 words per minute. The Standards and Testing Agency considers this rate of fluency to be sufficient for students to begin explicitly focusing on comprehension. Consequently, in Key Stage 2, whole-class reading lessons begin to primarily focus on developing the skills associated with reading comprehension, which are: activation of prior knowledge; explaining vocabulary in context; active reading; skimming and scanning; paraphrasing; predicting; inferring; making comparisons; generalising; navigating; and summarising.

Our comprehension-focused reading sessions focus on a particular skill and graduate through an 'I do, We do, You do' lesson structure. Through direct instruction, the teacher informs the children of the reading skill they are looking at that day and reviews prior learning they have completed for that skill. After this, the children are exposed to a high-quality text, which has been selected to present an age-appropriate level of challenge. Fluency may be developed through echo or choral reading of the text, or simply by individual children reading the text aloud to the class. The teacher models applying the given reading skill to the text, either verbally or through a written response. They narrate their thought process as they do this, giving the children a chance to observe how a reader thinks as they apply a reading skill. This process is then repeated in a child-led way, with the teacher scribing ideas and offering constructive guidance where appropriate. Finally, the children independently apply the skill, with the lowest 20% supported if necessary through a guided group or scaffolded approach to the task.

Phonics and reading interventions for targeted children

We recognise that in order to achieve a good level of reading fluency, it is essential that children's phonic knowledge is of a high standard. Children who are not yet fully fluent by the start of Key Stage 2 will receive targeted provision that is designed to bring their phonic understanding to a standard that makes fluency possible. Phonics is taught 1:1 or in a small guided group by a trained member of staff.

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 minutes and take place at least three times a week.

Implementation in the whole school

Text based approach to the teaching of literacy – direct instruction

In addition to phonics and whole-class reading lessons, English is taught through a text-based curriculum using high-quality texts as a vehicle to teach reading, writing, grammar and spellings in context. During each half term, each year group focus on one main text and follow a reading into writing journey. This enables children to be exposed to a rich variety of language and acquire the skills used by quality authors. Texts are chosen by each year group from a shared pool of high-quality texts used by the CHANGE Hub of schools.

Environments (including displays and vocabulary)

Our school's environment reflects our aim of engaging all children in reading. Each classroom is equipped with English working walls which contain essential information for children to be able to recall and write about the high-quality text they are studying in English lessons. Every display in every classroom features handwritten word banks to which children are trained to refer when they are writing to increase their sight recall of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary. Automaticity in reading is developed by surrounding children with captions and questions on displays which promote deeper thinking.

Books are a central facet of our school environment that is not limited to the school library. Each classroom contains a reading corner that showcases engaging, attention-grabbing texts that are selected to offer challenge and engagement. Bookshelves are dispersed throughout the corridors of the school.

Story time

Our teachers build a daily story time into their timetable as a non-negotiable part of the school day. Our story times incorporate picture books, chapter books and poetry and serves a dual purpose: it fulfils children's cultural entitlement to hearing high-quality texts read aloud as well as building their fluency through expert adult modelling from a teacher.

Experiences

We provide reading-related experiences for children to enjoy. We are privileged to have access to professional storytellers from all walks of life who have enriched our children's appreciation of the aural storytelling tradition by visiting our school and sharing their expertise with our children.

Let's think, debate, oracy and drama

In the Foundation stage, we focus on developing vocabulary through early talk by creating a language-rich environment. We prioritise children's back-and-forth interactions with adults in all year groups, and children sit in mixed ability seating so that good speaking and listening skills can be modelled and shared.

Professional development meetings and INSETs

Our high-quality professional development as a school ensures teaching staff are up to date with current pedagogical approaches for the teaching of reading. School development and action plans have had reading as a focus and PDM meetings reinforce reading routines as well as update staff on new practices. Recent PDMs and INSETs which have focused on reading include: teaching using picture books; making effective use of story time sessions; and effective use of scaffolding in reading lessons.