

# St Anne Line Catholic Infant School

part of the wider Christus Trust, Multi Academy Trust

## Phonics and Early Reading Policy



**Love Learn Pray**



At St Anne Line Catholic Infant School, we understand the vital importance of early reading. We believe that every child can become a confident reader and writer, and we are committed to providing them with the tools to succeed. Every part of our curriculum is designed to absorb the children in high quality vocabulary and texts and so, through a language-rich environment and a structured approach to phonics and early reading, we aim to instill a lifelong love of reading in our children and ensure children are ready for the next stage of their educational journey.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that:

'Reading enables children to not only learn across the curriculum but also to access numerous aspects of daily life, influencing the opportunities that they have available to them in the future.'

As such, we have adopted Read Write Inc. Phonics. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading, using the Read Write Inc. programme, is accessible to all, ensuring that all children, regardless of their home language, have the skills and confidence to thrive as readers and writers.

## **Intent: How We Teach Children to Read and Write**

### **Phonics:**

We know that the sooner children learn to read, the greater their success at school. This is why we prioritise reading from the very start of school life, laying secure foundations for reading by developing early language, listening, and phonics skills, ensuring every child is given the best possible start to become a confident, fluent reader. The children's reading journey starts in our nursery classrooms, where children are introduced to reading stories and rhymes to children and developing their language and they practise using 'pure sounds', 'Fred Talk' to teach oral blending and to begin to name the pictures for each of the Set 1 sounds.

At St Anne Line Catholic Infant School, we continue to teach phonics using Read Write Inc. Phonics. This systematic and synthetic phonics programme ensures children are taught to decode (read) and encode (spell) with confidence from the very beginning. We also support our children's language development which is vitally important for the context of our school through reading, writing, and oral activities across the curriculum.

### **Comprehension:**

We value reading as a crucial life skill. Our mission is for every child to progress through the phonics programme in a structured, consistent, and supportive way, ensuring they read with fluency and comprehension, aiming for children to be readers who read confidently for meaning and for pleasure by the end of their infant education.

All teachers are highly skilled and equipped to deliver the early reading programme in our school, through expert-led and ongoing training. We continually train, monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the Read Write Inc. programme.

## **Implementation: How we teach**

### **Phonics Teaching:**

Phonics teaching begins in Nursery during Spring 2 before children enter Reception. Prior to this, children develop the essential foundations for phonics through listening activities, rhyme, rhythm, singing, environmental sounds, speaking and vocabulary development.

In Spring 2, children are introduced to early phonics through playful sound discrimination activities and oral blending games, including the introduction of “Fred Frog” sound games. This supports children in developing their listening and attention skills, hearing initial sounds, and beginning to distinguish between different sounds in words.

During Summer 1 and Summer 2, children build on these foundations by learning the RWI picture prompts and identifying initial sounds linked to the Read Write Inc. programme.

This gradual approach ensures that children develop strong speaking, listening and sound discrimination skills before progressing into more structured phonics teaching in Reception.

We begin formal phonics teaching as soon as children enter Reception. Phonics lessons are taught daily with consistency and fidelity to the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme. The lessons are carefully planned to follow a clear sequence of learning, so that children can build their phonics skills steadily and confidently.

## The sequence:

|  |  |   |                                  |  |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |                                 |
|--|--|---|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Reception Autumn Term 1 Expectations         |  |   |                                  | Reception End of Spring Term 2 Expectations    | Reception End of Year Expectations                    |   |   |   | Year 1 End of Year Expectations                |  |  | Year 2 End of Year Expectations |
| Set 1 Sounds and learning to blend and spell | Set 1 Sounds learning to blend and spell | Set 1 Sounds, blending independently and spelling | Set 1 Sounds and Special Friends | Set 1 Sounds, reading words and nonsense words | Set 1 and 2 Sounds, reading longer words and spelling | Set 2 and 3 Sounds, reading longer words and spelling | Set 2 and 3 Sounds, reading longer words and spelling | Set 3 Sounds, reading longer words and spelling | Set 3 Sounds reading longer words and spelling | Set 3 Sounds reading longer words and spelling | Set 3 Sounds reading unfamiliar words and spelling | Spelling and vocab              |
| <b>Group A</b>                               | <b>Group B</b>                           | <b>Group C</b>                                    | <b>Ditties</b>                   | <b>Red</b>                                     | <b>Green</b>  | <b>Purple</b>   | <b>Pink</b>   | <b>Orange</b>                                   | <b>Yellow</b>                                  | <b>Blue</b>                                    | <b>Grey</b>  | <b>Comprehension</b>            |

## How we begin phonics in Reception:

Phonics is introduced in Week 1 of the Autumn term, starting with simple sounds (**Set 1**) and progressing to more complex phonics patterns (**Set 2 and 3**). Children are taught the 40+ phonemes of the English language, alongside key spelling patterns. We aim for all of our children to 'keep up' from the very start through one-to-one teaching for specific children at exactly the right level. From as early as the second half-term, children are grouped into progress groups with the support of the Reading Leader based on their assessment result and the teacher's knowledge of the child. Lessons range from 10 minutes at first, building up to 45 minutes by the end of Reception.

### Speed Sounds:

**Set 1:** Single letter sounds taught first (m, a, s, d, t, i, n, p, g, o, c, k, u, b, f, e, l, h, sh, r, j, v, y, w, th, z, ch, qu, x, ng, nk).

**Set 2:** Two-letter sounds (digraphs like ay, ee, igh, ow) with associated pictures and phrases (e.g., "ay" as in "may I play").

**Set 3:** More complex sounds (e.g., a-e, ea, i-e, o-e, u-e)

Lessons start with a Speed Sounds lesson (which involves teaching or recapping a Set 1, Set 2 or Set 3 sound) and then a Storybook lesson once they are reading words with

special friends (including 3-sound nonsense words with Fred Talk), and reading all Set 1 sounds speedily.

Phonics teaching in progress groups continues from Reception to Year 2, and deepens with the introduction of more complex GPCs (Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences) as children move through the programme in their progress groups. Children who are not yet fluent in reading and writing receive additional support through keep-up sessions which includes Early Morning Phonics interventions, from the start of Year 1, and/or targeted tuition of the child's sound gaps with an expert teacher.

Progress groups continue into Year 2 and children who still need support receive additional phonics tuition and may continue with the Read Write Inc. programme until they have achieved fluency in reading. Children then move onto the Read Write Inc. Comprehension programme where they are taught how to develop fluency, understanding and a love of reading. Through carefully structured lessons, children learn how to retrieve information, make predictions, discuss vocabulary, sequence events and answer comprehension questions using evidence from the text. They are also encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills through partner discussions and oral rehearsal. The programme supports children in becoming confident, independent readers who can read with accuracy, expression and understanding across a range of texts.

### **How We Teach Children to Remember Phonics**

Lessons follow a repetitive and predictable structure, with teachers using the same consistent language across each progress group. This approach avoids overcomplication, reduces cognitive load, and allows children to focus on mastering the learning rather than decoding changing instructions or expectations.

### **Key techniques in line with Read Write Inc. principles include:**

- *Silent signals* are used to maintain focus and maximise learning time, ensuring transitions are calm and purposeful.
- Children are taught to identify *Special Friends* and use *Fred Talk* to orally blend sounds when reading unfamiliar words.
- When spelling, children use *Fred Fingers* to pinch each sound, supporting accurate phoneme-grapheme correspondence.

- *Red Rhythms* are used to help children learn and retain tricky words that cannot be sounded out.

This consistent, structured approach allows children to concentrate fully on reading and spelling, building confidence, fluency, and secure early literacy skills.

## **How We Ensure Children Can Read Every Book**

The key to our phonics programme is ensuring children read books that match their phonics knowledge. We provide decodable books (Book bag books) so children can practise reading in a controlled way, ensuring that they can read every word they encounter without resorting to guessing. We read lots of other stories to them, but do not expect them to read these for themselves until they start to read the Grey Storybooks. We also provide opportunities for reading for pleasure with our extensive library which includes Share-a-Story books (fiction), Fact-Finders books (non-fiction) and Link Books (books which link closely to the sounds children are practising).

Children are introduced to:

**Story Green Words** – These are words that appear in the storychildren are reading that they can sound out and read using their phonics knowledge.

**Speedy Green Words** – These are green words children already know well. The aim is to read them quickly and automatically, which helps with fluency.

**Red Words** – These are tricky words that cannot be sounded out easily. Children learn them by remembering the whole word, often using rhythms or visual tricks.

## **The sequence of Storybook Sessions (within phonics lessons):**

Children read the same book three times over four days to improve fluency:

- **Day 1: Accuracy** - Decode the words carefully with speed sounds from the storybook, story green words, speedy green words and red words. Partner practice of these to develop their accuracy and confidence.
- **Day 2: Accuracy** - Listen to a thought-provoking introduction to excite the children, first read of the book with partner practice, listen to the teacher model reading with a 'read aloud' of the book and write a sentence (hold a sentence) linked to the book.
- **Day 3: At a glance** - Recap of speedy green words, words with the teacher then a partner practice and a second read of the book.

- **Day 4: Storyteller voice** - Children 'think about the story' to help develop their understanding and thinking, they read the story with a partner for the third read, and answer questions to deepen their comprehension. They write a sentence linked to the story (hold a sentence).

By the time children read the story at home, which is sent to the children via an eBook library, they will be able to read it confidently with expression.

Story and Poetry Time outside of the phonics lesson:

We read stories and poems aloud to children every day. These texts are carefully chosen to reflect the children's interests, broaden their vocabulary, and open windows to different worlds. Children have the opportunity to engage with a range of texts, retell stories, and act them out in role-play. (See our reading spine)

## **Spelling and Handwriting**

In addition to reading, we teach children to spell confidently and write independently:

- **Fred Fingers:** This strategy is used to help children spell regular words by breaking them into individual sounds.
- **Red Rhythms:** We use rhythmic patterns to help children remember irregular spellings (e.g., 'said' and 'was').
- We teach children how to form Set 1 sounds right at the start of Reception in our speed sounds lesson.

Please see our spelling and handwriting progression available on the website and our English Policy

## **How We Assess Children's Progress**

We track children's progress closely, using both formative and summative assessments:

- **Half-term Assessments:** We assess children every half-term (or sooner) to ensure they are placed in the correct progress group and assess their progress in decoding, fluency, and comprehension.
- **Fluency Assessments:** These short one-minute assessments used for some children measure how quickly and accurately children can read words and sentences.

- Phonics Screening: All Year 1 children sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child who does not pass in Year 1 will retake the check in Year 2. 'Mock' tests to help teachers target support for each child throughout the year.
- Keep-up Support: For children who need extra support, we provide daily one-to-one tutoring or small group sessions to ensure they catch up with their peers. We believe in a "Keep up, not catch up" approach. These sessions range from focusing on reinforcing phonics knowledge, improving fluency, and building confidence in reading.

### **Statutory assessment**

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check in June. Any child not passing the check will re-sit it in Year 2. For those children in Year 2 who did not pass the phonics screening test in Year 1, additional, small group or one-to-one interventions take place. The children are also tracked and assessed by the class teacher and/or Reading Leader to ensure progress is being made.

### **Additional reading support for SEND, vulnerable and disadvantaged children**

- Daily Reading Practice: Children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 who are receiving additional phonics keep-up sessions, or who are disadvantaged, read their reading practice book to an adult every day. This helps to consolidate phonics skills, build fluency, and boost confidence.
- Targeted Phonics Support: Small-group, early morning sessions or 1:1 sessions provide extra practice with sounds, blending, and tricky words. These sessions follow the same structured Read Write Inc. approach to reduce confusion and cognitive load.
- Use of Visual and Practical Strategies: Teachers use Fred Fingers, Fred Talk, Red Rhythms, and Special Friends to make reading and spelling accessible for all learners.
- Repetitive Lesson Structure: Consistent routines and language across lessons help SEND and disadvantaged pupils focus on learning without being overwhelmed by new instructions.
- Monitoring and Feedback: Progress is tracked closely, and teachers provide immediate feedback and encouragement, ensuring children consolidate skills before moving on.

- 'Phonics on the Move': For children who are not yet able to access the phonics progress groups, our trained teachers use short, targeted, multisensory sessions. These sessions allow children to practise sounds, blending, and spelling in small steps using movement, visual cues, and practical activities. This approach helps children build their confidence, develop early phonics skills, and prepare them to join the main phonics groups as soon as they are ready.

## **Ensuring consistency and pace of progress**

Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach reading and continually access CPD opportunities to be an expert reading teacher, 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.

Coaching sessions take place by the Reading Leader throughout the year and a RWI consultant three times a year to ensure children are receiving the very best teaching of phonics and reading.

Read Write Inc. resources, the script and 'How to' videos on the RWI portal ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.

## **How Parents Can Support at Home**

We believe that parents are key partners in their children's reading journey. We encourage parents and children to read at home regularly. We provide a range of resources, including eBooks and quizzes, Book Bag books, colour-banded books (link books), and Share a Story (fiction) and Fact-Finders (non-fiction) library books. Parents are also encouraged to keep a reading record and participate in shared reading experiences with their child using virtual phonics classrooms.

We provide parents with access to virtual phonics classrooms using QR codes. We find providing these help support our parents who may not have English as their first language and for parents who may be new to phonics. Parents can join in with their child using these online lessons to reinforce the learning happening at school. Our annual phonics information workshops for Reception and KS1 parents are popular and allow parents to support their child's reading journey at school and at home. Plus, our phonics packs are sent home to support children needing additional support.

## Ensuring reading for pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002). We value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy. In addition to our phonics and reading lessons we provide:

- **Enriching Reading Experiences:** We understand that reading should be a joyful and immersive experience. To complement our phonics teaching and support the development of strong literacy skills, we organise various events throughout the year. These events help to spark excitement and create memorable reading experiences. These include: book fairs, listening to spoken stories from professional storytellers, author visits, celebrating World Book Day, visiting the local library, Christmas reading challenge, Essex Libraries Winter and Summer Reading Challenges.
- **Diverse and Engaging Texts:** We expose children to a wide range of texts, including Read Write Inc. books, picture books, rhymes, poetry, traditional tales, fables, Bible stories, and non-fiction books. Each classroom has an engaging book corner with a carefully selected range of books that supports reading for pleasure and current topics in the curriculum. Our extensive library offers children the chance to choose Share-a-Story books and Fact-Finder books. In addition, our curriculum has been carefully designed to provide children with a rich diet of quality literature. This not only promotes a love of reading for pleasure but supports children's language development. Our Writing Club literacy lesson in Reception immerses children in the world of story, shows children the joy of who you are and provides a treasure trove of vocabulary with children to open up the playground of language. Book Club in KS1 offers additional opportunities for children to engage with diverse stories, ensuring they see themselves reflected in the texts and gain insight into other cultures and experiences. These books promote empathy, self-reflection, and curiosity about the world. (please see our Reading Spine on our website).

## Impact

The impact of our reading curriculum is evident in the confidence, fluency, and enjoyment our children demonstrate in their reading. Through our commitment to structured, high-quality phonics instruction, targeted support for slower progress readers, and the integration of reading across the curriculum, we ensure that every

child has the opportunity to succeed and become a confident, independent reader. The majority of our children pass the Phonics Screening Check.

### **What are the expectations of children's progress on the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme?**

It is expected that:

Reception children will be able to read Green Storybooks by the end of the summer term.

Year 1 children will be able to read Blue Storybooks by the end of the summer term.

Year 2 children will have completed the Phonics programme by the end of the spring term.

And so, by the end of Key Stage 1, children will have developed:

1. **Confidence and Fluency:** Children will be able to read a wide range of texts fluently and with understanding. They will demonstrate the ability to decode unfamiliar words and apply phonics knowledge accurately.
2. **Comprehension Skills:** Children will be able to talk about the books they have read, express opinions, answer questions, and make inferences. They will be able to discuss themes, characters, and plot, demonstrating a deep understanding of the text.
3. **A Love of Reading:** Our children will have developed a love of reading, engaging with books for both enjoyment and learning. They will be able to choose books independently, demonstrating curiosity and a desire to explore new stories, topics, and genres.
4. **Lifelong Learning:** The strong reading foundation laid in Key Stage 1 will equip children with the skills necessary to succeed academically across all subjects. They will be able to read to access learning in other areas, thus fostering overall academic success.

We measure the success of our reading curriculum through teacher assessments, progress tracking, including meeting the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check. Children will leave St Anne Line Infant School with the skills, knowledge, and passion for reading that will support their ongoing academic journey and prepare them for future success in their educational path.

## **Equality Statement**

It is our aim that through specific and accurate planning, resource allocation, adapted teaching and use of adult intervention and support (where necessary), that every child will have full access to the curriculum and feel and be enabled to participate actively in developing to their full potential, their skills, knowledge and understanding. We will ensure that all children with identified specific needs and disabilities are able to participate in all areas of the curriculum and if necessary make any 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure this occurs.