



Phonics and Reading **Policy**

Dated: September 2026

Review: September 2027

1. Rationale and Aims

At Firs Primary School, we believe that every child should become a fluent, confident and enthusiastic reader who understands and enjoys what they read, regardless of starting point, background or additional need. Reading is fundamental to success across the curriculum and is prioritised from the beginning of Reception.

Our reading curriculum follows a clear journey from phonics to accurate decoding, fluency, comprehension and increasingly independent reading. Vocabulary, oracy and reading for pleasure are developed alongside this journey so that pupils can access the full curriculum and build positive identities as readers.

We aim for pupils to:

- secure the alphabetic code and use phonics confidently to decode unfamiliar words and spell;
- develop accuracy, automaticity, prosody and fluency;
- understand, discuss and respond to increasingly challenging texts;
- develop rich vocabulary and use talk to explain, justify and deepen understanding;
- read widely across fiction, non-fiction and poetry;
- encounter high-quality texts that reflect diverse cultures, families and experiences; and
- choose to read for pleasure and develop informed preferences as readers.

2. Phonics and Early Reading

Systematic synthetic phonics

We follow Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. In Reception and Year 1, phonics is taught daily following the programme progression. Teaching systematically reviews prior learning, introduces new grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs), and develops blending for reading and segmenting for spelling. Pupils apply their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code in both reading and writing.

Reading practice

Children take part in Little Wandle reading practice sessions using books precisely matched to their secure phonic knowledge. These sessions develop decoding, prosody and comprehension. Children are given opportunities to reread texts so that decoding becomes increasingly automatic and attention can shift towards expression and meaning.

Keep-up and catch-up

Little Wandle assessments are used regularly to identify what pupils know and the precise gaps requiring further teaching. Assessment informs teaching, grouping and targeted keep-up/catch-up provision. Pupils who are not keeping pace receive additional targeted practice and are reassessed to check that support is having the intended impact.

Phonics and matched decodable reading continue into Year 2 for pupils who still require them, and beyond Year 2 where appropriate. Pupils are not moved away from systematic phonics simply because of their chronological age.

3. Transition from Phonics to Fluent Reading

As decoding becomes secure, teaching increasingly develops accuracy, automaticity, prosody and fluency. Approximately 60–70 words per minute is considered alongside accuracy and comprehension when deciding whether a pupil is ready for increasingly independent reading. This is used as an indicator rather than as a stand-alone threshold.

In Year 2, pupils' phonic knowledge, decoding and reading fluency are assessed before they move away from fully decodable reading. Once sufficiently secure and fluent, pupils transition to Reading Plus alongside teacher-led comprehension teaching and independent book choice.

Reading Plus – Year 2 to Year 6

Once pupils in Year 2 are sufficiently secure and fluent in decoding, they transition from Little Wandle reading practice to Reading Plus. From this point, pupils in Years 2–6 use Reading Plus four times each week, alongside explicit teacher-led reading and comprehension teaching.

Reading Plus sessions provide regular opportunities for pupils to:

- read appropriately matched texts independently;
- develop reading fluency, rate and stamina;
- practise and develop comprehension across a range of texts;
- develop vocabulary and understanding of language; and
- respond to questions about what they have read.

Reading Plus assessment information is used alongside teacher assessment to monitor pupils' reading development and identify where additional teaching or support may be required. Reading Plus complements rather than replaces high-quality teacher-led reading instruction, book discussion and reading for pleasure.

4. Teaching Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is taught explicitly and reinforced through English and the wider curriculum. Our ERIC approach (Explain, Retrieve, Interpret and Choice) provides a

shared language for developing comprehension through carefully selected texts, modelling, questioning and discussion.

Once sufficiently fluent, pupils use Reading Plus four times each week. Reading Plus is used alongside, rather than instead of, teacher-led reading and comprehension teaching. Teachers use assessment and their knowledge of pupils to ensure that reading remains appropriately challenging and responsive to need.

Vocabulary and oracy are integral to comprehension. Adults explicitly teach and model vocabulary, encourage pupils to discuss texts, and provide opportunities to retrieve, interpret, explain, justify and make connections.

5. Reading for Pleasure and the Reading Culture

Every class is read to daily. Our reading tree exposes pupils to high-quality fiction, non-fiction and poetry, including classic and contemporary literature and texts representing diverse cultures, families and experiences. Books are used as both mirrors of pupils' own lives and windows into the wider world.

Our reading culture is supported through:

- daily teacher read-alouds and regular book talk;
- classroom reading areas and access to the school library;
- the playground reading shed and lunchtime reading opportunities;
- independent reading and recommendations between pupils and adults;
- author events and experiences; and
- the travelling book fair.

Pupils are encouraged to develop their own reading identities and preferences. They are not expected to persevere with a book they are not enjoying and are supported to select an alternative that is accessible, interesting and appropriately challenging.

6. Home Reading and Book Choice

EYFS and KS1: Children take home a reading-for-pleasure book to share and enjoy with their family and a decodable book matched to their secure phonic knowledge and current stage within Little Wandle.

Year 2 - transition from phonics: Once assessment shows that phonic knowledge, decoding and fluency are sufficiently secure, pupils transition to Reading Plus for use at school and at home. They also choose a library book. Teachers use book talk and recommendations to help pupils make informed choices based on interest, accessibility and appropriate challenge.

KS2: Pupils increasingly take ownership of book choice. Adults use book talk, recommendations and knowledge of individual readers to guide pupils towards

appropriately challenging books and broaden their experience of authors, genres and subjects.

7. Inclusion

We maintain ambitious expectations for all pupils while adapting teaching responsively. Modelling, repetition, oral blending, visual support, structured practice, sentence stems, additional processing time and adult support may be used where appropriate. Pupils with SEND, pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils facing other barriers are supported to participate meaningfully and make progress from their starting points.

Where pupils have not secured the foundations of reading, support is matched to the identified barrier: phonics, decoding, fluency, vocabulary and/or comprehension. Intervention does not replace access to high-quality classroom teaching.

8. Assessment and Identifying Pupils Who Need Support

Assessment is used to identify what pupils know, where gaps exist and what needs to happen next.

- Little Wandle assessments identify secure phonic knowledge and precise gaps in early reading.
- Teacher assessment monitors day-to-day reading, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.
- NTS reading assessments support monitoring of attainment and progress in reading.
- Reading Plus assessments provide additional information about reading rate and comprehension for pupils using the programme.
- Statutory assessments are used where applicable.

Pupils falling behind are identified quickly and provision is reviewed regularly, including through Diminishing the Difference meetings with teachers, senior leaders and the SENDCo. Assessment information is used diagnostically to adapt teaching and evaluate whether additional support is closing identified gaps.

9. Leadership, Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The Reading and Phonics Lead supports consistent implementation across school and works with teachers, teaching assistants, senior leaders and the SENDCo to evaluate provision and identify priorities. Monitoring includes assessment information, lesson visits, reading practice, book scrutiny, pupil voice and professional discussion with staff.

Monitoring is used to evaluate:

- the consistency and effectiveness of Little Wandle implementation;
- whether books and reading practice are appropriately matched to pupils' needs;
- whether pupils are becoming increasingly fluent and independent;
- the quality of comprehension, vocabulary and oracy teaching;
- the effectiveness of targeted support; and
- the strength of the school's reading culture.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Reading and Phonics Lead: provides subject leadership, supports staff development, monitors implementation and outcomes, reviews resources and uses evidence from monitoring and assessment to identify next steps.

Class teachers: deliver agreed approaches consistently, assess pupils accurately, respond to identified gaps, provide appropriate reading experiences and promote reading for pleasure.

Teaching assistants and other adults: deliver agreed reading and phonics support with fidelity, provide precise feedback to teachers and model positive reading behaviours.

Parents and carers: are encouraged to read regularly with children, share reading-for-pleasure books, support rereading of matched decodable texts and use home reading resources, including Reading Plus where appropriate.

11. Review of the Policy

This policy describes the school's agreed approach to reading and phonics. It will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to the school's chosen programmes, statutory requirements or agreed practice. Current attainment data and short-term improvement priorities are maintained separately within subject leadership documentation so that this policy remains a stable statement of practice.