

Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Intent

At St John's C of E Academy we use FFT Success for All programmes to support our mastery approach to early reading. We are committed to providing the very best provision so that all children master the skills to become confident, fluent readers and writers. We know that high-quality phonics teaching improves literacy levels and gives all children a solid base on which to build and develop their reading habits so that they read widely and often for information and pleasure. We have a strong emphasis on the development of language and give specific attention to developing vocabulary and speaking and listening skills.

Through daily, systematic and consistent high-quality phonics teaching, children learn to blend and segment words for reading and spelling. To allow our children to develop a strong phonological awareness and effective blending, decoding, fluency and comprehension skills, we have chosen to use a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics programme (SSP) called FFT Success for All Phonics from FFT. The programme supports our intentions to teach children to read and write independently so that they are able to access a broad and exciting curriculum and flourish as learners throughout their time at our school.

The phonics programme is part of a comprehensive package of programmes which we use to support a mastery approach to phonics and early reading. The FFT Success for All programmes (Phonics, Shared Reader, Tutoring with the Lightning Squad and Reading Assessment Programme (RAP) complement each other in highly effective ways and provide the tools that all our practitioners need to develop competent, fluent early readers, preparing the way for passionate and successful lifelong reading.

We have strong fidelity to the programmes we have selected because we ensure that training is of the highest quality. All staff have access to regular training and share best practice in school and with others. We are well supported by the team at FFT Success for All who offer responsive and up-to-date information and professional development. As a result, our staff are well trained and proficient in the teaching of phonics and early reading.

Co-operative Learning strategies are embedded within the programmes and provide a platform where mastery teaching can take place. They support the generation of a 'collaborative, thinking classroom' where children are responsible and successful learners. Children are given opportunities to work in partnerships, use peer teaching and to support one another. They are encouraged to build resilience in their learning and become trained in the expectations of successful Co-operative Learning. Suggestions are made within The Reading Framework for effective pair work and these are part of the Co-operative Learning pedagogy within FFT Success for All programmes.

Implementation

At St John's C of E Academy we implement FFT Success for All Phonics which provides 68 fully decodable reading books (Shared Readers), daily phonics and reading lesson plans, assessment tools, picture cards, mnemonics for letter formation and all other teaching resources needed to support the effective teaching of phonics from EYFS to the end of Year 1. The programme is designed for daily use from the beginning of Reception, enabling children to make a smooth transition from Reception to Key Stage 1. The daily lesson plans cover all the main Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs) and Common Exception Words (CEWs) to provide children with the phonic knowledge and skills required for success in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check.

We also use FFT Success for All Phonics to teach children who are new to English or are learning phonics for the first time and we implement the phonics programme alongside FFT's reading tutoring programme (Tutoring with the Lightning Squad) which can be used by schools to provide catch-up support for children where necessary and the Reading Assessment Programme (RAP) which we use as an effective diagnostic tool. The programmes are fully aligned to the revised Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and National Curriculum programmes of study for reading in Key Stage 1.

Our aim is for children to become fluent, confident readers by the end of Key Stage 1.

The programme is underpinned by a set of **seven core principles** designed to support all teachers and children.

Core Principles

1. Systematic Progression

- Introducing phonics and its application to early reading in a carefully sequenced and progressive way: moving from developing phonological awareness through rhyme to introducing Grapheme– Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs) in order, through a six-phased progression.
- Practising the skills of blending and segmenting as new GPCs are introduced and reinforcing them throughout the programme.
- Developing an increasing bank of accessible words, including Common Exception Words (CEWs).
- Building confident readers through the consistent, systematic and daily teaching of the FFT Success for All Phonics programme with accompanying Shared Readers.

2. Regular Assessment

- Providing frequent and comprehensive formative and summative assessment opportunities to inform teaching and ensure that children's progress is closely monitored.
- Providing an opportunity for the early identification of children who may be at risk of falling behind.
- Using the Reading Assessment Programme (RAP) as a diagnostic tool and to support formative and summative assessments.

3. Early Intervention

- Ensuring that the lowest attaining 20% of children also make progress and reach age-related expectations is fundamental to our mission to secure FFT Success for All children.
- Providing dedicated time for review and consolidation of skills to ensure children needing extra support do not fall behind.
- Providing Tutoring with the Lightning Squad to support catch-up and additional teaching to those children whose reading skills are below age-related expectations. The tutoring programme has an integrated assessment tool so that skills gaps are automatically identified and addressed.

4. Multisensory Approach

- Providing pacy and active lessons that balance short inputs of direct teaching with immediate whole-class response and engagement.
- Providing multisensory lessons that engage all children in a variety of activities designed to support learning in fun and memorable ways.
- Linking pictures and mnemonics to support the learning of each GPC and helping children to recall and remember.

5. Co-operative Learning

- Underpinning daily lessons with Co-operative Learning techniques in which learning skills are developed by teachers explicitly modelling behaviour for learning.
- Using positive feedback to help children to understand when they meet expectations and for motivation.
- Encouraging children to work together in supportive peer partnerships.

6. Application of Skills

- Providing texts – Shared Readers – which are carefully aligned to progression in phonics skills, so that children are motivated to apply their new learning in a meaningful way.
- Developing a separate, but linked, approach to the teaching of reading comprehension during the Shared Reader lessons.

7. Reduced Workload and Collegiate Approach

- Providing comprehensive lesson planning and resources, as well as training and ongoing support, we try our best to make teachers' lives easier and reduce lesson preparation time, benefitting everybody in our school community.
- The shared, school-wide approach engenders a focus on outcomes for children and a collaborative team effort across all staff in our school.

FFT First Steps to Phonics

The First Steps to Phonics programme provides a progressive and flexible approach to initial phonics teaching and learning. At St John's C of E Academy we use the programme to teach phonics skills to two groups of children:

- Nursery children to prepare them for phonics in Reception;
- Children who need a slower pace of learning, have SEND or other needs that prevent them from accessing the FFT Success for All Phonics lessons.

The First Steps to Phonics programme is designed to introduce children gradually to phonics by first embedding phonological awareness before moving on to teaching Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs). The entire autumn term is spent teaching all seven aspects of Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds:

1. General Sound Discrimination - Environmental
2. General Sound Discrimination - Instrumental
3. General Sound Discrimination - Body Percussion
4. Rhythm and Rhyme
5. Alliteration
6. Voice Sounds
7. Oral Blending and Segmenting

The aim is that children should become attuned to the sounds around them and start to develop their oral blending and segmenting skills before formal phonics sessions are introduced during the spring term. The programme seeks to reduce the cognitive load for children by gradually introducing more phonics skills during the year. This keeps early sessions short, which is appropriate for young children. It also enables them to understand and master initial skills before moving on to apply them for reading and writing.

Throughout First Steps to Phonics, each GPC is taught over 2 days, instead of 1 day as in FFT Success for All Phonics lessons. This provides more opportunity for consolidation, helping children to remember the GPCs they are taught.

The first 12 weeks of the programme are used to support further provision in Reception as required.

Daily Phonics Lessons in Reception and Year 1

Over the course of 3 terms, your children will cover the first 50 sounds in the developmental progression. The planning is divided into weeks or 'Steps' of the programme, with each Step covering a select number of GPCs. FFTs Success for All's Scope and Sequence document sets this out.

During Term 1, children will learn 3 or 4 new GPCs per week, with the final day of the week being reserved for review and consolidation.

Starting in Term 2, children begin to learn vowel digraphs at a pace of 1 per week.

During Term 3, children continue to learn vowel digraphs along with common alternative spellings.

The year concludes with 3 weeks of review to consolidate all Reception level content in preparation for Year 1.

To support both teachers and children, the phonics lessons follow a consistent daily structure with clear timing goals for each activity. This consistent approach enables lessons to be taught with pace as everybody understands the routine and what is expected. Each lesson lasts 25 minutes and follows the same basic sequence each day:

- Review of Previously Taught GPCs (10 minutes)
- Teach, Practise and Apply New GPC (15 minutes)

Daily Shared Reader Lessons in Reception and Year 1

Shared Readers are fully decodable texts in a wide range of genres that include familiar characters, settings and topics relevant to children of all ages.

Over the course of 3 terms, children will on average read 32 Shared Readers linked to the progression of sounds in their daily phonic lessons. It is important that children don't simply know their phonics but can apply that knowledge to the skill of reading itself. That's why the Shared Readers are carefully aligned to the phonics lessons and allow children to practise reading the new and recently taught GPCs as well as the Common Exception Words to which they have been introduced.

To support both teachers and children, the Shared Reader lessons follow a consistent daily structure with clear timing goals for each activity. This consistent approach enables lessons to be taught with pace as everybody understands the routine and what is expected.

Each Shared Reader is designed to be read over 5 days.

In Reception Term 1, the lesson plans are 15 minutes long, before progressing to 20 minutes in Term 2 and 30 minutes in Term 3 in order to be ready for a full 30-minute session in Year 1. This is partly to accommodate the increasing length of the texts, as well as the introduction of sentence writing.

In addition, the five-day schedule also provides opportunities to develop comprehension, fluent reading and to consolidate letter formation, spelling and sentence writing. During their reading sessions, children are introduced to conventions for grammar and punctuation, so they learn how they impact on reading. Understanding these conventions also aids comprehension and their ability, eventually, to write with meaning.

Consolidation

Time for consolidation is built into phonics and Shared Reader lessons so that children can revisit prior learning and consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding. It is also a time to carry out summative assessments and to act on the analysis and information gathered.

Keep-Up and Catch-Up Guidance

Children are provided with opportunities to keep up with the pace of learning in lessons, through additional sessions and within wider implementation across the curriculum in EYFS and Year 1. Targeted teaching and resources are used to support pupils at all levels to master the skills required for the next step in learning.

Children who need to catch up more significantly will be provided with the support they need to make progress from their starting points and to master skills incrementally to achieve success. They will do this in a range of ways supported by the resources and tools provided within the programmes, by expert teaching and through the tutoring programme as necessary.

Tutoring Programme

Tutoring with the Lightning Squad (TWL) is an approved tutoring programme that is designed to enable pupils to catch up with their reading skills. It provides assessment, planning and teaching tools for tutoring pupils in pairs or individually. The programme provides structured reading activities and practice to address skill development in fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension.

In a TWL tutoring session, pupils work in pairs on a computer. During the activities, partners take turns completing activities and providing feedback to each other. The member of staff works with pupils to provide support, teaching and helping them if they get stuck, conducting quick checks to verify mastery and providing feedback to ensure success.

Wider Reading and Home Reading Guidance

The Shared Reader books will be sent home at the end of each week via a hyperlink on Class Dojo.

Children will be familiar with this book from the Shared Reader lessons they have had during the week.

As a school we have also collated books together, matching the Steps within the FFT Success for All Phonics programme. Children will bring home a book matched to their current phonic ability so that they can use their phonic knowledge to tackle decodable words.

Some of the first books a child will bring home are wordless books. These are used to encourage children to talk about the pictures and stories and to create their own sentences about what they see and what is happening in the pictures.

Children may also bring a book for you to read to them. These are books that you regularly see on children's bookshelves and in the library. They are stories that excite children and instil a love of reading.

Prioritising reading for pleasure

At St John's C of E Academy we prioritise reading for pleasure by promoting reading and striving for mastery within the teaching and learning we offer. We have chosen FFT Success for All programmes because they set reading expectations high. The language in the Shared Readers is rich, varied and motivating.

We encourage active reading across the school by:

- Reading to the children every day.
- Offering a rich and diverse range of texts to children, opening their eyes to the world and different cultures.
- Providing book areas in classrooms for children to select and have access to quality texts that are age and stage appropriate.
- Giving every child a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and vice versa to ensure communication between home and school has a positive impact on learning. As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read.
- Celebrating reading through events, visits, visitors and in celebration time.

Parental Engagement

At St John's C of E Academy we support parents to work in partnership with us so that they can support their child with phonics and early reading in the best ways possible. We provide information to help them understand our teaching methods and the programmes we use. Parents can access key information via our website <https://fft.org.uk/phonics/> and the Parent Portal - <https://parents.fft.org.uk/> and of course, we will answer parent questions about the programme, please direct questions to your child's teacher.

Assessment

Making accurate assessments of individual pupils against key learning outcomes is essential for a mastery approach so that learning can be built incrementally in progressive and systematic steps as soon as they need to.

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support.

The assessment expectation across the programme is for daily, formative monitoring and feedback to be carried out and for this to be supported and validated by using the Reading Assessment Programme (RAP).

RAP provides an effective diagnostic assessment tool which identifies a child's strengths and areas of development and is used to inform the next steps in teaching and learning. Progress is demonstrated using the summative assessments as they provide an accurate and systematic picture and include elements such as an assessment of fluency.

Assessment for Learning (AFL) - the day-to-day assessments a teacher makes to inform practice are part of everyday classroom practice. In phonics and early reading, they allow the teacher to identify children needing keep-up support. In the review part of each lesson, gaps can be identified and addressed and time can be allocated within consolidation days and weeks to address areas in which children are not as secure.

Frequent formative assessment opportunities are built into FFT Success for All Phonics in the form of Consolidation Weeks. These weeks are a vital part of the success of the programme as children will not always master a GPC the first time it is taught. Formative assessment is also based on daily classroom work and observation, capturing children's responses to questions and their oral and written contributions, where these indicate their knowledge or use of a particular GPC. Similarly, children's interactions with books and other texts will give teachers a good indication of how well they are able to apply their phonics knowledge and skills to reading.

Summative Assessments and the Reading Assessment Programme (RAP)

We use FFT's Reading Assessment Programme (RAP) to highlight strengths and identify areas of weakness in children's key reading skills. This information informs planning and helps to pinpoint the reading skills that need development, whether through catch-up intervention or whole-class teaching. Thereby 'plugging those gaps' and securing children's reading skills as they move through their primary school journey.

There are 29 assessments within FFT's Reading Assessment Programme (RAP) all matched to the scope and sequence of the phonics and Shared Reader lesson content. Staff here at >>>> receive regular training and updates to ensure that the assessment information has a positive impact on outcomes for all our children.

Statutory assessment

We prepare children well to take the DfE Phonics Screening Check. This screening check confirms whether the child has met the appropriate phonics standard in Year 1 and can be used diagnostically to identify areas that need further attention going forward. Children who do not meet the required standard will continue their phonics lessons so that they are ready to retake the screening at the end of Year 2.

We provide children with high-quality teaching and learning as well as access to past checks that are all held within the Reading Assessment Programme (RAP).

Impact

We monitor impact through the assessment data we obtain and through monitoring of practice.

Analysis of data informs practice and supports ongoing developments in early reading so that all children master the skills, knowledge and understanding required to be confident and fluent readers.

Lesson observations, shared pedagogical dialogue, shared best practice and an ongoing commitment to achieve the very best for all our pupils make for impactful practice.

We set expectations high and measure the impact against these expectations. Our findings are built into action planning and are part of our continual cycle of improvement.

Whole School Commitment

We pledge our commitment to continued development with phonics and early reading and look to research and new initiatives to expand and enhance the provision we offer.