

Phonics and Early Reading at WHPS

As a school, our aim is to unlock for the joy and learning that comes through reading. Our curriculum is designed to enable the children to progress as quickly as possible from **learning to read** to being able to **independently read to learn**.

At WHPS we follow *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* as our **Systematic, Synthetic Phonics** programme (SSP) to teach early reading and spelling. Children from Nursery to the beginning of Year 2 follow a structured daily programme which enables new learning to solidly embed.



On the journey to becoming a successful reader, there are five essential components that the children need to develop.

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|------------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------------|
| Phonological Awareness | Phonics | Fluency | Vocabulary | Comprehension |
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Phonological Awareness

Strong phonological awareness is a key predictor of reading success. We begin work on this in Nursery by providing sessions from the Foundation programme of Little Wandle which are designed to develop skills in different aspects of phonological awareness. These include:

- tuning into sounds around including using instruments
- detecting rhyme e.g. through nursery rhymes and games
- detecting syllables in words by clapping them
- identifying initial letter sounds through sorting games
- orally blending and segmenting words e.g. “Can you touch your h-ea-d?” “Can you pass the p-e-n?”



Supporting at Home

The more children have opportunities to develop these skills at home and at school, the better they will become! For example:

I spy games with a contained focus are easy to fit into everyday routines e.g. at mealtimes, “I spy something on my plate beginning with...p” (saying the letter sound not its name).

Oral blending games e.g. “Who can see a d-o-g?” “Can you h-o-p?”

Phonological Awareness continues to be crucial as the children enter Reception and as they get older and need to tackle more complex words.

Phonics

From Reception to the first term in Year 2, the children receive daily phonics lessons which are fun, engaging, interactive and are designed to build over time. A key element of the sessions is constant revisiting of previously taught sounds and skills so that learning is embedded in the long-term memory and can be applied instantly when reading and writing. Practice makes permanent!

Phonics teaching in **Reception** covers *Little Wandle Phases 2-4* and the lessons include phonological awareness activities, the introduction of GPCs (the letters which represent different sounds) and teaching how to blend sounds for reading and segment words for spelling.



The children also have plenty of opportunities to practise and apply their phonic skills outside of the lessons during modelled focused reading and writing activities and in play.



In **Year 1**, the children continue to revise previous learning, then move on to **Phase 5** of *Little Wandle*. Phase 5 directly builds on the children's Reception knowledge and skills and teaches the children the remaining range of GPCs along with structured practise applying them for reading and spelling.



In the first half term of **Year 2** the children revise their **Phase 5** learning before moving on to tackle more challenging texts.

Crucially all Reception and Year 1 children are able to practise and apply their phonic skills during scheduled Guided Reading sessions each week (see **Fluency** section below).

Assessment

Children are regularly assessed in their phonics and reading skills to ensure that children are on track with their learning and so that we can provide targeted and timely interventions through 'Keep up' and 'Catch-up' groups for those who need it across the school.

Supporting at Home

You can support at home by providing plenty of 'little and often' practise for the children to develop speedy recall of all taught phonemes (sounds) and to practise blending and spelling using the new sounds. Phonics homework directly links to learning in the lessons that week so that parents and carers are well informed regarding new teaching.

Videos modelling how to say phonemes correctly and matching them to their graphemes (letter representations) can be found on the *Little Wandle* website (see link below).

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read accurately, at an appropriate pace and with attention to expression - it is the bridge to comprehension.

If children are struggling to decode words reading can become exhausting. Children can then lose motivation and find it harder to comprehend what they are reading. This is why phonic decoding needs to become accurate and automatic with plenty of opportunities for the children to practise reading aloud with appropriate pacing, phrasing and expression.

At WHPS, children in Reception and Year 1 have guided reading sessions for 20 mins/three times a week using the same book which has been matched to their secure phonic knowledge and blending skills. Fluency is built throughout the three sessions in a way that could not be achieved by reading the book once only.

The sessions are supported by adults from across the school and comprise of:

Session 1 – decoding focus

Session 2 – developing reading with expression (prosody)

Session 3 – comprehension focus



Crucially, children also develop their command of fluency through having strong language and communication skills, opportunities to listen to and join in with retelling stories, and as stated above, having plenty of practise at reading passages of text aloud with appropriate pace and expression. These opportunities are built into the curriculum throughout your child's reading journey across the school to Year 6.

Supporting at Home

In the early stages, parents can support at home by hearing their children read their home reader books several times to develop fluency. Reading engaging picture story books to your child is crucial also so they can hear fluent reading of story language modelled for them and can join in with key phrases or repeated refrains.

It is generally found that parents tend to read less often to their children as they go through KS2 but older children still benefit hugely from hearing adults read to them. Taking turns to read sections of their home reader books is a fantastic habit to build.

Vocabulary

Developing a strong vocabulary enables children to think and understand more deeply - the more they understand word meanings, the deeper their comprehension. Vocabulary development comes from having quality conversation with others from birth, exposure to rich and interesting texts and having opportunities to discuss the texts they are reading. Throughout WHPS we are exposing the

children to new words daily across all areas of the curriculum and provide plenty of opportunities to revisit and use them so they embed.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate goal and the sum of good **phonological awareness**, automaticity in **phonics**, reading **fluency** and a strong **vocabulary**.

If we can extract meaning from a text and think critically about it, then we comprehend.

Children move from *learning to read* to *reading for learning and enjoyment*. This is the goal for all of our children.

Reading for Pleasure

Throughout their time at WHPS, children will experience and enjoy a vast number of high-quality stories. Through the provision of inviting book corners, engaging daily story times, as well as special events, staff aim to share their own love of reading and promote reading for pleasure. We want all of our children to be highly motivated to want to read for themselves.



We are excited at West Hampstead to be going on the journey to reading with your children, it is crucial that parents and carers are on board too. Please speak to your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's reading progress.

Resources for parents linked to the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds programme can be found on their website. www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents

