



# ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Phonics and Early Reading Policy

### **Mission Statement**

"I called you by your name, you are mine." Isaiah 43

The mission of our school is to support and further the teachings of Christ and His Church.

We welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

We aim to enhance and celebrate their moral, physical, social and emotional development, so that they may reach their full potential in an atmosphere of stability, care and respect.

We believe that education is for all and in partnership with parents, carers, children and the wider Catholic community: we will strive and succeed in a wholly inclusive setting.

### **Equality Statement**

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School.

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

**Written by: Mrs Claire Burns, Phonics and Early Reading Lead**

**This policy was reviewed: November 2022**

**The policy is to be reviewed: November 2025**

## **Curriculum Intent**

*At St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. The systematic teaching of phonics has a high priority throughout Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. At St Augustine of Canterbury, we value reading as a key life skill, and are dedicated to enabling our children to become lifelong readers. We acknowledge that children need to be taught the key skills in segmenting and blending to be equipped with the knowledge to be able to complete the phonics check at the end of year 1. We also value and encourage the children to read for enjoyment and recognise that this starts with the foundations of acquiring letter sounds, segmenting and blending skills.*

## **Aims and Objectives**

*Our approach to Phonics at St. Augustine of Canterbury, aims to quickly develop children's word recognition and spelling through developing their ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes (the smallest unit of spoken language), and to teach children the relationship between phonemes and the graphemes (written letters or combinations of letters) that represent them.*

*At St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, we use a systematic approach that explicitly teaches children a comprehensive set of letter-sound relationships through an organised sequence. We follow the "My Letters and Sounds" systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme, validated by the DfE and aligned to the DfE Letters and Sounds guidance.*

*We aim to teach children to:*

- have the skills to decode words in order to be able to read fluently with a secure understanding of what they have read.*
- have access to a home reading book matched to their phonic ability. Reception children will begin with fully decodable storybooks, progressing through different stages as they develop their skills and confidence.*
- be enthusiastic and motivated readers who are confident and will enjoy reading a wide variety of genres and text types, having a broad exposure to culture and the arts.*

## **Implementation**

*Phonics is taught daily to all children in Reception and KS1. Extra support is provided to those in Year 2 who have not passed phonics screening in Year 1 and additional interventions are planned for those children who are working below expected levels. Staff systematically teach learners the relationship between sounds and the written spelling patterns, or graphemes, which represent them. Phonics is delivered in a whole class format because it enables staff to ensure application across subjects, embedding the process in a rich literacy environment for early readers.*

## **Teaching and Learning**

*We start teaching phonics in term 1 of Reception Year following the progression outlined in 'My Letters and Sounds' which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. As a result, all our children are*

able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At St. Augustine of Canterbury, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Phonics is taught in a highly structured programme of whole class daily lessons across Reception and KS1, with targeted catch up interventions, differentiated according to children's phonic awareness and development.

### **Phases and Progression**

My Letters and Sounds is divided into five phases. Phases One to Four cover the Reception year and Phase Five covers Year 1. In each phase, new teaching builds upon the children's knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and phonics skills taught in the previous phase.

An overview document of the new content and skills in My Letters and Sounds Phases Two to Five can be found [here](#).

### **Reception**

Children in Reception begin with a recap of **Phase 1** during the first few weeks, which provides a range of listening activities through play, to develop their listening skills. After the initial few weeks, children are introduced to **Phase 2**, which marks the start of systematic phonic work.

**Grapheme-phoneme correspondence** is introduced during Phase 2. The process of segmenting whole words and selecting letters to represent those phonemes is taught writing the letters to encode words.

**Phase 3** completes the teaching of the sounds for the remaining alphabet letters and then moves on to cover sounds represented by more than one letter, learning one representation for each of the 40+ phonemes. At this stage, just one grapheme (spelling) is given for each phoneme.

By the summer term of Reception, children continue into **Phase 4** where they start to read and spell words containing adjacent consonants. No new phonemes are introduced at this phase.

### **Year 1**

At the beginning of Year 1, following a revision unit focussing on **Phase 3** GPCs and **Phase 4** blending, children will focus on **Phase 5**, broadening their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes for use in reading and spelling. They will learn new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these and graphemes they already know, where relevant.

### **Year 2**

In Year 2, children will start **Phase 6** using the original Letters and Sounds progression Guidance. Much of this phase is concerned with spelling development rather than phonics, though the principles are the same. Phase 6 develops a variety of spelling strategies including homophones (word specific

spellings) e.g. see/sea, spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters where necessary. Also, the accurate spelling of words containing unusual grapheme-phoneme correspondences e.g. laughs, two.

Most children will still need plenty of phonics work combined with spelling instruction during Year 2, in order to consolidate previous learning and support them in spelling more complex words.

Supporting children who have not achieved the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check  
Children who do not reach the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check may have differing needs in Year 2.

This is gauged on an individual basis as there may be some children who missed the pass mark by only a few marks, while other children may have greater needs.

Children in Year 2 receive regular phonics interventions at whichever level they are working at in readiness to retake the Phonics Screening Check, in addition to participation in whole class Phase 6 lessons.

### Lesson structure and strategies

The daily phonics session lasts about 20-30 minutes. Each phonics lesson gives an opportunity for children to revisit their previous experience, be taught new skills, practise together and apply what they have learned, challenging the children to have high aspirations.

The phonics lesson follows a clear teaching sequence: Introduce > Revisit and review > Teach > Practise > Apply > Assess.

#### Introduce

Each daily lesson has a specific focus, such as introducing a new GPC or tricky word. This is shared with the children at the start of each lesson.

#### Revisit and Review

Each lesson begins with a quick revision of previous learning. The My Letters and Sounds lesson plans contain specific suggestions for what to revise, based on reinforcing learning from recent lessons, but this is adapted according to the needs of the children in each class.

#### Teach

This part of the lesson is where the new content is being taught - usually a new GPC or tricky word, although occasionally the focus is on a new phonics skill, such as blending to read or segmenting to spell.

In Reception there is more focus on the **mnemonics** and learning about the **digraphs** and **trigraphs**. The concept that two or three letters make one sound is quite difficult for some children to grasp and they may need a lot of teaching in order to consolidate it.

#### Practice

In this part of the lesson, the children practise reading or spelling words containing the GPCs or reading or spelling new tricky words taught that day.

The words used in this part of the lesson also frequently include previously learnt GPCs.

### Apply

In this part of the lesson, the children are, with increasing independence, applying the new knowledge and skills they have learnt to read or write whole sentences containing the focus grapheme/s and/or tricky words.

### Assess

Daily assessment statements are provided in the My Letters and Sounds lesson plans to help focus observations on the children's responses to the day's new learning, as well as their progress in using the key skills of blending and segmenting. Ongoing daily assessments help to track the children's progress and decide if future planning needs to be adjusted or catered for (for example, by pinpointing particular graphemes or tricky words that require revision).

### High Frequency Word and Tricky Words

The reading and spelling of high frequency and tricky words are taught continuously throughout each of the 6 phases. An overview of the Tricky words taught in Reception and Year 1 can be found within the new content and skills document [here](#).

### Early Reading

In addition to the practice and apply stages of the daily Phonics lessons, we teach children to read through additional guided reading sessions.

During these sessions, the children are taught by the teacher in small groups of approximately six children. The Class Teacher rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

The guided reading session uses books which are matched to the children's phonic knowledge using the My Letters and Sounds decodable readers as well as ORT Floppy Phonics, Songbirds Phonics and Biff, Chip and Kipper Stories.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, concentrating on three key reading skills:

- o **decoding**: applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships to correctly pronounce written words.
- o **prosody**: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
- o **comprehension**: teaching children to understand the text.

In Reception, guided reading sessions start as soon as possible, with decodable readers starting from the end of Phase 2 Week 2. Children who are not yet decoding have additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books.

In Year 2 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

### Home reading

Children are given a decodable reading practice book to be taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. These are changed regularly, with additional guidance on how to use these at home shared with Parents/carers through Parent Information letters.

Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents/carers to share and read to children. Children select a book each week from our school library.

Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book to an adult in school regularly, in addition to the guided reading sessions. Ensuring consistency and pace of progress.

### **Ensuring reading for pleasure**

At St. Augustine of Canterbury, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose through a range of activities and initiatives:

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. Adults promote these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- In Foundation Stage, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Home reading records are kept within the children's contact books. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and the adults will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school.
- 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.
- The school library is made available for classes to use. In addition to this, we have an outdoor library at lunchtime, led by librarians from Year 5.
- Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events e.g. book fairs, author visits and workshops, national events etc.

### **Assessment**

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

Assessment for learning is used daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support as well as weekly during the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative assessment is also used each term to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the keep up support that they need.

## Statutory assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Children who do not achieve the pass mark have continued phonics intervention and resits the Phonics Screening in Year 2.

## Ongoing assessment for catch-up

In KS2, particularly in Year 3, children are closely monitored and additional phonic intervention is provided in instances where the Phonics Screening has not been passed during the Year 2 retake or for those children who achieved the retake pass mark, however still have gaps in their phonic knowledge.

## **Impact**

Through the teaching of systematic phonics, children will become fluent readers by the end of Key Stage One. This way, children can focus on developing their fluency and comprehension as they move through the school.

Attainment in reading is measured using the statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage One and Two. Attainment in phonics is measured by the Phonics Screening Test at the end of Year 1. However, we firmly believe that reading is the key to all learning and so the impact of our phonics and early reading curriculum goes beyond the results of the statutory assessments.

By the time children leave St Augustine of Canterbury, they are competent readers with high aspirations, who can recommend books to their peers, have a thirst for reading a range of genres including poetry, and participate in discussions about books, including evaluating an author's use of language and the impact this can have on the reader.

## Further Resources

My Letters and Sounds digital resources -

<https://www.schofieldandsims.co.uk/mylettersandsoundsresources/>

Phonics Play - <https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

Additional physical resources - phonics pebbles, Active Phonics bibs, flashcards, phoneme fans, Phonics cubes, phonics dice, phonics flipbooks etc.

## Appendix

<b>Phonics Glossary</b>	
<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Adjacent consonants</b>	Two or three consonants next to each other that represent different sounds. For example, <b>bl</b> in <b>black</b> . Notice here that <b>bl</b> makes the two different sounds <b>b</b> and <b>l</b> , whereas <b>ck</b> makes the single sound <b>ck</b> .
<b>Blending</b>	Blending involves merging the sounds in a word together in order to pronounce it. This is important for reading. For example, <b>j-a-m</b> blended together reads the word <b>jam</b> .
<b>Consonant</b>	The letters of the alphabet (apart from the vowels <b>a, e, i, o</b> and <b>u</b> ).
<b>Consonant digraph</b>	A digraph that is made up of two consonants ( <b>sh</b> in <b>shop</b> ).
<b>CVC words</b>	A consonant-vowel-consonant word, such as <b>cat, pin</b> or <b>top</b> .
<b>CCVC words</b>	Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words such as <b>clap</b> and <b>from</b> .
<b>CVCC words</b>	Consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant words such as <b>mask</b> and <b>belt</b> .
<b>Decoding</b>	Decoding is the ability to apply your knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words.
<b>Digraph</b>	A grapheme made up of two letters that makes one sound ( <b>sh</b> in <b>shop</b> ).
<b>Grapheme</b>	Graphemes are the written representation of sounds. A grapheme may be one letter ( <b>f</b> ), two letters ( <b>ir</b> ), three letters ( <b>igh</b> ) or four letters in length ( <b>ough</b> ).
<b>Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)</b>	Knowing your GPCs means being able to hear a phoneme and knowing what grapheme to use to represent it. This is helpful for spelling. It also means seeing a grapheme and knowing the phoneme that relates to it, which is important for reading.
<b>High Frequency Words (HFWs)</b>	High frequency words are one of the main types of sight words and are those words which occur most frequently in written material. They are often words that have little meaning on their own, but they do contribute significantly to the meaning of a sentence as a whole.
<b>Mnemonics</b>	Memory aids or devices that help learners recall larger pieces of information.
<b>Phoneme</b>	Phonemes are the smallest unit of speech-sounds which make up a word. If you change a phoneme in a word, you would change its meaning. For example, there are three phonemes in the word <b>sit</b> /s/-/i/-/t/. If you change the phoneme /s/ for /f/, you have a new word, <b>fit</b> . If you change the phoneme /t/ in <b>fit</b> for a /sh/, you have a new word, <b>fish</b> - /f/-/i/-/sh/. There are



	<i>around 44 phonemes in English and they are represented by graphemes in writing.</i>
<b>Polysyllabic</b>	<i>Polysyllabic words are words which have two or more syllables.</i>
<b>Segmenting</b>	<i>Segmenting involves breaking up a word that you hear into its sounds. This helps with spelling because if you know what graphemes represent the sounds in the word, you can write it! For example, the word <b>jam</b> is segmented into the sounds <b>j-a-m</b>.</i>
<b>Sound buttons</b>	<i>Sound buttons are circles or spots that can be written underneath a sound to support reading. When you touch the sound button you then practice saying the sound aloud.</i>
<b>Split digraph</b>	<i>A digraph that is split between a consonant (<b>a-e</b> in <b>make</b>). A split digraph usually changes the sound of the first vowel. For example, compare the pronunciation between <b>man</b> and <b>made</b>.</i>
<b>Tricky words</b>	<i>Words that are commonly used in English (HFWs), but they have spelling patterns which make them difficult to read and write using introductory phonic knowledge. For example, <b>said</b>, <b>of</b> and <b>was</b>.</i>
<b>Trigraph</b>	<i>A grapheme made up of three letters that makes one sound (<b>igh</b> in <b>high</b>).</i>
<b>Vowel</b>	<i>The letters <b>a</b>, <b>e</b>, <b>i</b>, <b>o</b> and <b>u</b>.</i>