

Carrington Infant School (Carrington Schools Federation)

Phonics Policy

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Carrington Schools Federation: an ambitious, caring, and inclusive community.

VISION:

To be a nurturing community that develops respectful, resilient, and happy children with the self-belief, knowledge, and skills to thrive in the future.



Date Policy last reviewed: October 2025

Signed by:

Head Teacher: Kate Cliffe

Chair of Governors: Nadia Zachary

Date:

Date:

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Carrington Infant School, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching Little Wandle Foundations in our Reception and we follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. We work closely with Carrington Junior School to make sure that phonics learning continues into Year 3 with Little Wandle Letters and Sounds, for those children that still require it.

Our intention is for our children to be able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Carrington Infant School, 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.

Comprehension

At Carrington Infant School we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, we aim for our children to 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.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Phonics Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled in teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our teaching team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Reception

We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems
- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- attention to high-quality language
- helicopter story-telling

We ensure reception children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

Little Wandle Foundations is aligned to the non-statutory guidance on Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. We use it as part of our wider provision for Communication and Language, and Literacy. It supports children to:

- develop their phonological awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllables, initial and voice sounds, and oral blending
- love stories and rhymes, and learn by heart a bank of familiar favourites
- increase their vocabulary and confidence to talk
- improve their listening and ability to take part in back-and-forth conversations.
- Language and nursery rhymes in Reception

Research tells us that nursery rhymes can support children to develop their language, their awareness of sounds within words and even their later reading (Bryant et al. 1989).

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to full-length lessons as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term. We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress.

Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.

Children in Year 1 review Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read.

Any child in Reception and Year 1 who needs additional practice has Daily Keep-up support and is taught by a fully trained adult.

Daily Keep-up lessons follow the Little Wandle progression and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition so that every child secures their learning.

Daily phonics and spelling in Year 2

Year 2 begins by using assessment to ensure that children have completed the Little Wandle Year 1 progression. Any gaps in teaching are addressed through daily phonics lessons until the programme is completed. Corresponding summative assessments are carried out to ensure this content is secure.

Once all the Year 1 content has been taught and assessed, we teach a five-week Phase 5 review. This ensures that children secure the trickier elements of Phase 5 and can apply this alphabetic knowledge in both reading and spelling.

We use the Phase 5 review assessment before teaching in Year 2 to identify any children who may need more support when teaching. We reassess after teaching the Phase 5 review.

Once the Phase 5 review is secure; we teach the Bridge to Spelling before moving to the Spelling units.

Children with larger gaps in their phonic knowledge than their peers revisit the sounds and words needed a focus group.

Children in Year 2: Rapid Catch-up

A smaller group is created for children who need rapid catch up – focussing on the gaps in their prior learning.

- These short, sharp lessons last 20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.
- We use our Little Wandle assessment tracker to ensure we focus on the sounds and words needed to reduce cognitive load.
- We reassess these children when the targeted sounds and words have been taught and adapt the teaching to continue to fill gaps in their phonetic learning.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

We teach reading practice sessions three times a week.
These sessions:

- are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments.
- are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- decoding: teaching children to use phonic knowledge to read words.
- prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression.
- comprehension: using dialogic talk to help children to understand the text.

In Reception, these sessions start in Week 4 of teaching. Initially, children will read wordless books. In these sessions, children review GPCS and are taught blending using teacher-led blending. Once children can blend, they progress onto decodable books matched to their secure phonic knowledge.

Children read each book three times to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension as well as book behaviours.

In Year 2, we ensure children complete reading the core programme decodable books (up to Phase 5 Set 5). Children who complete the programme have guided reading fluency sessions.

Teaching reading: Fluency programme

- We teach reading to children in Year 2 and above who have exited the core programme using Little Wandle Fluency.
- Each Fluency reading lesson is 20 minutes. The structure of every lesson is the same:
 - A pre-read to practise reading words and to support vocabulary
 - Children read aloud for ten minutes and the teacher 'taps in' to hear every child read
 - Focussed teaching of prosody, repeated reading and comprehension through discussion.
- We assess reading speed and accuracy and use these assessments to monitor progress and ensure they should keep reading our chapter books.

- We review children's prosody by encouraging people to read out loud this gives us a picture of how well the child is reading aloud.
- Comprehension is taught through dialogic talk and teachers use their AfL to quickly address misconceptions and develop children's curiosity and engagement with each book.

Home reading

- The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
 - Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children.

Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Daily Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book regularly to an adult in school.
- We prioritise children who may not have reading support at home or who may not have access to books. We ensure that they have individual reading times with volunteers and staff to share quality children's literature to promote a love of reading.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach reading, 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.
- Weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.
- Lesson templates, prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- Phonics lead and SLT monitor consistency throughout the school through learning walks, using the 7 key features document.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

We highly value reading for pleasure and work hard as a school to grow our reading for pleasure pedagogy.

- We read aloud to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including those that reflect the children at Carrington Infant 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. We curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- In Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free-flow time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Children choose from our school library books to take home and share with an adult.
- Each class visits the local library every half term.
- We have 'Carrington Little Library' that has books for everyone in our school community. People can take books and leave books.

Impact

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

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is used:

- daily within class to identify children who require Daily Keep-up support, as well as words and GPCs that need additional teaching
- to plan repeated practice throughout the day to ensure all children secure learning
- weekly in the Friday review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative assessments are uploaded onto the assessment tracker for Reception and KS1

These are used:

- to generate visual reports (pupil heatmaps, pupil trends and books levels, and a summary analysis) for individual children, classes and whole year groups.
- by teachers, Phonics Leader and SLT who drill down and look at the data at GPC, word, tricky word and sentence level

We assess:

- every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be reviewed or retaught.
- to establish if learning is secure for more than 70% of children before new content is taught.
- to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.

Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments.

They are used:

- in Year 1 and Year 2, when children are reading the Phase 5 Set 3, 4 and 5 books
- with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Years 2, when they are reading the Phase 5 Set 3, 4 and 5 books
- to assess when children are ready to exit their programme

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sit it in Year 2.