

St Thomas More Phonics Policy

At St Thomas More Primary School we believe that the teaching of high quality Phonics is vital in order for children to become competent readers and writers. We teach high quality integrated and discrete phonics lessons following the government recommended 'Letters and Sounds' document, alongside our own mnemonics.

'Letters and Sounds' is designed to teach children how the alphabet works for reading, writing and spelling. 'Letters and Sounds' is designed as a time limited programme of phonics. It works on securing fluent word and sound recognition skills for reading and writing by the end of Key Stage One and as an intervention in Key Stage Two.

Overview

- Phonics sessions are taught discretely every day and practitioners ensure a high quality, systematic, synthetic approach at a brisk pace.
- The aim is that all children will begin to develop their phonic knowledge and decoding skills throughout Key Stage One in order to become fluent readers.
- We focus on a multi-sensory approach, which suits all visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. Our sessions include opportunities for active involvement and creative activities.
- Children are taught that phonemes are blended from left to right in order to read and that words can be segmented into their phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending.
- Throughout the 6 phases, all children are taught the grapheme/phoneme correspondences, high frequency words (including those that do not conform to completely to grapheme/phoneme correspondence rules) and how to use their phonetic knowledge to read and write both regular and irregular words.
- Children's progress is assessed through observations during phonics sessions, through reading and writing and through frequent phonic assessments.

Organisation

- Phonics sessions are taught by class teachers in individual classes. Learning outcomes and support are differentiated, based on the needs of children working on different phonics phases. Teaching assistants support key children during the phonics session as well as conducting intensive interventions, if needed, in order to progress and develop understanding. Sessions generally last approximately 20 minutes.

Expectations

(Expectations are dependent on the ability of each individual year group. Groups should be assessed and the needs of individual children met through sessions and interventions)

- In Reception, classes are assessed on phonic knowledge upon entry and children begin phonics at phase 1 or 2. Throughout the year, the children will progress onto phase 3/4 depending on the ability of individual year groups.

- In Year One, classes follow on from the work done in Reception and aim to cover phase 5 by the end of year.
- In Year Two, classes follow on from the work done in Year One and aim to recap alternative phonemes/spellings in phase 5 and complete phase 6 by the end of the year.
- Phonics work is continued throughout Key Stage 2 through guided group work where appropriate.

Planning

- Planning is split into four sections (Revisit and Review, Teach, Practice, Apply) and it includes differentiated learning outcomes based on the needs of the children in the class.
- Activities are as interactive and creative as possible, in order to maintain children's interest and enable all children to be engaged. Resources can be borrowed from the phonics area but must be returned for others to use.
- Ideas for interactive session ideas are kept in a file in the phonics area.

Consistent Strategies

- Staff model segmenting words using phoneme fingers and blend words by either blocking words together (short words i.e. cvc – phase 2 and 3) or stretching words out of the mouth (longer words – phase 4 onwards).
- Phonics grids are provided in writing areas to provide visual support when writing.
- Each Key Stage One classroom has a phonics area and/or interactive display within their continuous provision.
- Staff maintain the use of correct language during phonic sessions and encourage the children to do the same whilst also translating into child friendly understanding i.e. explaining that a phoneme is a sound.

Here are some abbreviations for the terminology:-

Phoneme – the individual sounds in a word e.g. **C a t**

Grapheme – a written form of sounds in a word e.g. **Ch i p** (all individual graphemes)

Digraph - Two letters which together make one sound, e.g. **sh, ch, ee, ph, oa**.

Split digraph - Two letters, which work as a pair, split, to represent one sound, e.g. **a-e as in cake, or i-e as in kite**.

Segmentation - hearing the individual phonemes within a word e.g. **crash is c – r – a – sh**.

Blending - merging the individual phonemes together to pronounce a word e.g. **'th-i-n-k is think**.

Phoneme-grapheme correspondence – relationship between sound (phoneme) and written symbol (grapheme).

Assessment

- Children are assessed through observations during phonic sessions, continuous assessments and evidence in reading and writing.
- Teachers update their class phonics tracker at the end of every term. Names are recorded on what phase each child is currently working on.
- Children are tested towards the end of Year One as part of the Phonics Screening Check, which assesses their phonetic decoding abilities. As part of the screening check, children demonstrate their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs), simple word structures and complex word structures, including two syllable words.
- Pupils who do not reach this standard at the end of Year One, will receive support from school to ensure they can improve their phonic decoding skills. Pupils will then have the opportunity to retake the screening check in Year Two.

Targeting children who are not making progress

If children are not making the expected progress, there are a number of ways this can be addressed.

- Interventions may be put in place to develop phonic knowledge of a small group of children. This is monitored by the class teacher. Interventions can include focused work on phoneme/grapheme correspondences or developing reading using phonetically decidable books.
- Termly tracking meetings are used to highlight individuals/small groups who are not meeting the learning outcomes within differentiated sessions and next steps can be decided.
- Discussions with the SENCO are held to highlight any concerns with individuals/small groups that may need to be addressed and appropriate strategies that need to be put into place.

EAL/SEN Children

- The needs of all children should be met within phonics sessions and this should be assessed and planned for at the beginning of each year through discussions with previous class teachers and the SENCO. Potential barriers to learning should be removed.
- Specific teaching strategies can be implemented into whole class teaching or small guided group work during phonics sessions to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- Teaching assistants are to support children during sessions and bilingual support can be given.

Phonics in Continuous Provision

- Teachers aim to develop a phonics based area and/or interactive display in their classrooms. The area includes a focus on phonemes/graphemes and high frequency words from the phase being covered, as well as resources that support and develop their learning in phonics. This encourages children to develop their phonics skills and allow an opportunity for staff to work with children in order to meet their needs and address any misconceptions.