

Last Updated | 05/09/2023

Newstead Academy



Phonics and Early Reading Policy

September 2023 – September 2024

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The context of our school

Newstead Academy is a specialist setting for communication and interaction needs. All of our pupils have an EHCP and require high levels of support across the curriculum. A number of our pupils are non-verbal. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At **Newstead Academy** 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 and synthetic phonics programme. We teach phonics throughout Newstead Academy and 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 follow the SEND strand of Little Wandle which has a key focus on appropriate pace and delivery for our pupils. Our pupils may take longer to work through the programme but our aim for all our pupils is to complete the Little Wandle programme.

By the end of the programme, all our children should be able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At **Newstead Academy**, 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 as we know that having communication skills and the ability to show attention and listening skills are key for learning.

Comprehension

At **Newstead Academy** we value reading as a crucial life skill. Our aim is that by the time our children leave us, they will have the skills to be able to read confidently, at their own level, and enjoy reading for pleasure, with the adult leading this where appropriate. 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 Reading Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* programme.

Implementation

We are a 'needs led' setting and so children work their way through the programme at the pace that is appropriate for their own level of development. This means that we do not set learning pathways by age but by each child's unique journey.

First steps

- 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.
- We ensure children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in the next stage of their journey

Moving to a phonics session

- We teach phonics for a set block of between 5 and 15 minutes a day, this is done individually or in small groups. In addition to this we also share daily oral blending games and children regularly revisit sounds during their provision sessions and directed tasks linked to their EHCP.
- We follow the [Little Wandle SEND programme](#):
 - This programme covers all the key components and aspects of the Little Wandle programme but does so at a pace appropriate to each individual child. Some of the sessions are delivered in a more practical 'hands on' way but the key themes and sounds taught remain the same as the main programme.
 - Our aim is for our children to achieve to the very best of their abilities and to achieve this through their own personal learning journey.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

- We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These:
 - are taught by a fully trained adult either individually or in small groups- no more than 3.
 - use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of 'Application of phonics to reading'.
 - 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 focus of these reading sessions may be picture books depending on the individual level of the child.

- This session focuses on sharing a book together, with the child taking an increased lead as they move through the scheme.

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. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the [Everybody read!](#) resources.
 - We use the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources](#) to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops.

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.
- The Reading Leader and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002)
'The will influences the skill and vice versa.' (OECD 2010)

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

- 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 **Newstead Academy** and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- We share books with home and encourage sharing reading activities via our Tapestry app.
- Children will visit the local library every term.
- We use the Everybody read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

Impact

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to track children's progress to ensure that there are no gaps in learning. Assessment is used to adapt our teaching for the needs of our children.

- **Assessment for learning** is used:
 - daily within class to track and assess progress,
 - weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- **Summative assessment** for is used:
 - every six weeks 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.
 - by SLT and scrutinised through the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. This is dependent on the amount of words they can read per minute dependent on their particular stage. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at their identified level.
- A **placement assessment** is used:
 - with any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate extra teaching.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2. At Newstead Academy we will work with parents and may disapply children from these statutory assessments if we feel this is in their best interests.