



Shine like Stars



LOWDHAM C of E PRIMARY

Phonics Policy

‘Shine like stars’ Philippians 2:15

Love others – “My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.” John 15:12

Everyone join in – “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” Psalm 133:1

Always do your best – “Work at everything you do with all your heart.” Colossians 3:23

Reach out – “Do to others as you want them to do to you.” Luke 6:31

Never give up – “I can do all this by the power of Christ. He gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13



PHONICS POLICY

At **Lowdham CofE Primary School**, reading is central to our curriculum and is something we all love. Our desire is that all children become successful and fluent readers by the end of Key Stage 1. We believe this is achievable through a combination of strong, high quality, discrete phonics teaching combined with a literature-rich approach that promotes a ‘reading for pleasure’ culture. Phonics is one of the many skills needed to become a reader and writer. We aim to give children the best possible start on their reading/writing journey by teaching them the essential phonological/ phonemic skills and knowledge to decode and encode (spell) words independently from the outset. We strive to ensure that all of our pupils at Lowdham leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 with a genuine passion for reading and to have obtained all of the skills needed to tackle any book of their choosing.

Our policy sets out the means by which we ensure a consistent and systematic approach to the teaching and learning of synthetic phonics, as the prime method by which children learn to read and spell independently, automatically and confidently in the first years of their schooling. It reinforces our high expectations for pupil progress. We follow the accredited phonics Bug Club scheme, which was developed from the 2014 letters and sounds guidance. All staff engage in regular phonics refresher training.

What is Phonics?

- Phonics is the knowledge of how alphabetic sounds work and how these sounds are combined to correspond to the spoken word.
- It includes the skills of blending for reading and segmentation for spelling. -Blending is the skill of building words by merging phonemes together, this is used when reading words. -Segmentation is breaking down a word into its component phonemes, this is used when spelling words.
- A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that there are 44 different phonemes in the English language. In phonics the children are taught each of these phonemes and the alternative graphemes (different ways of writing) these phonemes.
- A grapheme is the written symbol of a phoneme; some phonemes are written with two letters – these are called digraphs. Some phonemes are written with three letters – these are called trigraphs.
- Split digraphs are two letters that make one sound, but the letters are not adjacent in a word (they are split by another letter).
- High frequency words (or tricky words) are words which children are unable to read using their phonic knowledge. These are taught as a whole word.

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- To establish consistent practice, progression and continuity in the teaching and learning of phonics throughout the school with a focus on quality first teaching.
- To ensure that systematic synthetic phonics (following the Active learn Bug Club phonics programme) is the first approach pupils use to help with their reading and spelling.
- To have robust assessment procedures to check progress and identify pupils in need of intervention.
- For pupils to apply their phonic knowledge in their reading and writing across the whole curriculum.
- For pupils to develop a love of reading and enjoy reading for pleasure, confidently across a range of genres.

Objectives:

- For our children to learn to read and write all 44 graphemes in the English language.



- To encourage the use of segmenting and blending so that decoding skills provide a solid foundation for reading, writing and spelling.
- To ensure children have specific strategies to identify and decode common exception words (tricky words).
- To ensure that the teaching of phonics is lively, interactive and investigative.
- To encourage children to apply their phonic skills in all curriculum areas.

Teaching Methods

A daily Bug Club phonics session is taught throughout Reception and Year 1 until children are secure in Phase 5. For those children that require it, this is continued into Year 2. The correctly matched resources are used each day in a structured, systematic way. Phonics sessions are structured in the same way each day and build in strong, consistent and familiar routines. Each lesson involves the revision and reading of phonemes, tricky words, decodable words linked to the phonemes taught, sentence and word building as well as spelling.

Marking

Staff ensure that invented spellings, e.g. *hoam* for home, are corrected sensitively and selectively so that a balance is achieved between acceptance of the child's application of current knowledge of phonics and ensuring that invented spellings do not become embedded. Selection of spellings to correct will be based upon what the child has been taught, i.e., if the grapheme has been taught, the spelling will be corrected if the child continues to spell incorrectly. This also applies to tricky words, as appropriate to their year group.

Learning Environment

Resources in the classroom support the children in applying phonics to reading and writing. In each classroom throughout Reception and Year 1, there are the correct Bug Club grapheme/phoneme displays, tricky word displays and word mats to support children to be independent in their spelling, whilst at the same time reinforcing the link between discrete phonics teaching and learning and its purpose in reading and writing.

Phonetically decodable texts

Children should only be reading texts which they can decode for themselves until they are reaching fluency. We use a range of phonically decodable books alongside the phonics teaching so that the children are reading exactly the right text for their decoding ability. Our phonic reading books are matched to the order of phonemes taught (Letters and Sounds phases) and children are assessed regularly to ensure they are on the correct stage of books.

Blending and segmenting

Systematic synthetic phonics is the approach that teaches letter sounds very rapidly, explicitly showing children how to build up words with letters from the start, and always includes blending with printed words. In systematic synthetic phonics, the graphemes and corresponding phonemes are taught just before the introduction of words that contain these letters. To read these words, children are taught to pronounce the individual phonemes (sounds) associated with the graphemes (letters) they see, and then to blend them together (synthesise) to form the word. The process is as follows:

- Children see a word, e.g. cat; it is not pronounced for them.
- They break it down into its individual letters (graphemes) and pronounce the corresponding sounds (phonemes) for each letter in turn: /c/ /a/ /t/
- Then they blend the separate phonemes together to form the word.



Oral blending and segmenting are taught and then applied to reading and writing. Using the Bug Club classroom resources, the children are taught that phonemes are blended in order from left to right. They are also taught how words are segmented into phonemes for spelling. Systematic synthetic phonics does not normally teach spelling, but Bug Club Phonics does teach spelling by reversing the reading process described above, i.e.

- Children hear a word, e.g. “cat” and say it.
- They say the first phoneme: /c/.
- They write the corresponding grapheme: ‘c’.
- They say the word again and say the next phoneme: /a/.
- They write the corresponding grapheme: ‘a’, and so on.

This process is known as **segmenting** and is followed by the children reading the word they have produced by sounding and blending.

Common exception words

Children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules. We call these ‘tricky’ words. Children are specifically taught the ‘tricky’ part of the word and strategies to remember this. They are taught to apply their knowledge of these words in reading and writing. The words are taken from phases 2 to 5 of Letters and Sounds revised.

Reading for meaning

Comprehension, meaning and prosody (the patterns of stress and intonation) are taught alongside the phonics programme. Reading for meaning is developed through a ‘guided reading’ system, beginning with phonetically matched Bug Club books in Y1 and leading to Lighthouse books in Y2 and Y3.

Assessment and Tracking

Towards the end of Y1, children complete the Phonics Screening Check (PSC). The results of this is a summative assessment of a child’s ability to read and decode. In preparation for this, children are given some practice screenings to enable them to become familiar with the structure and type of questions they will come across. These practice screenings help teachers to identify any gaps in learning and put in place intervention sessions for specific children. Any children in Y2 who did not meet the required standard in their screening in Y1 are also given booster sessions to close any gaps.

If children move into KS2 and are still below age related expectation in word reading and spelling, they are assessed using Bug Club assessments and intervention sessions are provided for them. Additionally they have regular 1 to 1 reading provision.

Any children causing concern will be discussed with the SENCO and English lead and suitable action plans will be put in place.

Parental Involvement

At transition meetings, the school phonics policy will be explained to parents.

For children in Reception, a meeting is held early in the Autumn term to discuss how their children learn to read and how they are able to support them at home. Home learning activities related to phonics, reading and writing will also be explained and examples given.

Parents of children in Y1 are invited to a meeting during the Autumn term to explain the ongoing teaching of phonics and to give them the opportunity to see lesson examples and resources. They are also given information about the PSC, how children are prepared for it and when it takes place.

Progress in reading and spelling development will be discussed at the usual parents’ evenings, or by appointment where necessary with individual parents.



Parents of children due to sit or re-sit the PSC will have information about this and final results of the screening check are reported formally to parents with the child's end of year report.

Reviewed and ratified by Governing body	Spring Term 2025		
Next Revision (Please highlight as appropriate)	Annual	Biennial	Tri-annual
To be reviewed	Spring Term 2027		