



## **How we teach Early Reading and Phonics**

### **What is Little Wandle Phonics?**

At our school we use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme to teach phonics and early reading. Phonics is a way of teaching children to read by helping them hear, identify and use the sounds (phonemes) that make up words.

Little Wandle is a systematic, synthetic phonics (SSP) programme. This means that sounds are taught in a clear, structured order, with lots of repetition and practice, so children build their skills step by step.

### **How it Works**

- Daily phonics lessons: All children in Reception and Year 1 take part in a daily phonics session. These lessons are quick, fun, and engaging, using songs, actions, and resources to help children remember sounds.
- Learning sounds and tricky words: Children are taught to recognise sounds (like s, a, t, p) and blend them together to read words (sat, tap). They also learn "tricky words" (such as the or was) which can't always be sounded out.
- Progression: The sounds are introduced in a set order. Children build from simple words to longer words and sentences as they gain confidence.
- Reading practice books: Children take home books that are carefully matched to the sounds they know. This means they can practise their phonics skills successfully at home and grow in confidence.

### **Why it Matters**

- Phonics gives children the building blocks for reading and writing.
- Once children can decode words (sound them out), they can focus on understanding what they read.
- Regular practice at school and at home helps children become fluent, confident readers.

### **How You Can Help at Home**







- Listen to your child read their Little Wandle reading book several times during the week – this helps them build fluency.
- Re-read favourite stories together to develop a love of books.
- Practise tricky words with your child (these will be shared by the class teacher).
- Speak to us if you're unsure about pronunciation – we can share videos and guides so you can support your child confidently.

Click here to hear the sounds as they are pronounced and taught on the Little Wandle Parents section: <https://www.littlewandle.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>

Little Wandle also have parent guides to explain how we teach word grapheme (letter) and phoneme (sound) available on the above link. Here is a little example:

### Phase 2 grapheme information sheet

Autumn 1

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
 S	 snake	Show your teeth and and let the <b>s</b> hiss out <b>ssssss ssssss</b>	Down the snake from head to tail.
 a	 astronaut	Open your mouth wide and make the <b>a</b> sound at the back of your mouth <b>a a a</b>	Around the astronaut's helmet and down into space.
 t	 tiger	Open your lips; put the tip of your tongue behind your teeth and press <b>t t t</b>	Down the tiger and across its neck.

### What does a Phonics session look like?

Each lesson is short (around 25 minutes) and follows the same structure, so children know what to expect and can focus on learning.

#### 1. Review & Revisit

- Children quickly go over sounds and words they have already learned.
- This keeps knowledge fresh and helps move it into long-term memory.
- They might use flashcards, oral blending, or quick-fire games.

👉 Example: "What sound is this? Can you say it? Can you find a word with it in?"

#### 2. Teach

- A new sound (phoneme) or tricky word is introduced.
- The teacher shows how to say the sound correctly and write the matching letter(s) (grapheme).

- Children practise saying the sound, writing it in the air, and spotting it in words.

👉 Example: Learning “ai” – children practise saying the sound, writing “ai” on whiteboards, and spotting it in words like “rain” or “snail”.

### 3. Practise

- Children practise blending sounds together to read new words containing the focus sound.
- They also practise segmenting (breaking words down into sounds) to spell.
- This is done through lots of repetition, games, and writing practice.

👉 Example: Teacher says “pain” – children sound out p-ai-n and blend to read the word.

### 4. Apply

- Children read or write short sentences using the sounds and words they’ve just learned.
- This helps them see how phonics works in real reading and writing.

👉 Example: Reading the sentence “The snail is in the rain.”

### 5. Review

- The lesson finishes by recapping the new learning.
- Teachers check children can remember the sound/word, ready for more practice next time.

## Guided Reading with Little Wandle

Alongside daily phonics lessons, children take part in Little Wandle reading practice sessions. These are small-group sessions, led by an adult, where children read a book that is carefully matched to their current phonics knowledge.

The sessions are short, focused, and take place three times a week.

### How it Works

1. Books matched to phonics
  - Each child reads a book that only includes sounds and tricky words they already know from phonics lessons.
  - This means children can focus on practising their reading skills without being asked to guess or struggle with words they haven’t yet been taught.
2. Three sessions with a clear focus
  - Session 1 – Decoding (sounding out): Children practise using their phonics skills to read the words accurately.

- Session 2 – Prosody (reading with expression): Children work on reading fluently, with the right pace, intonation, and expression, so the reading sounds like talking.
  - Session 3 – Comprehension (understanding): Children discuss the book, answer questions, and show that they understand what they have read.
3. Re-reading builds confidence
- Because children read the same book across the three sessions, they gain accuracy, fluency, and understanding step by step.
  - Re-reading also helps children feel successful and confident.

## **Books at Home**

- After the guided sessions in school, children take home the same Little Wandle book they've been practising.
- The aim is that they can read it fluently and independently to you at home — showing off what they have learned!
- They will also take home a sharing book (chosen from the class library) to enjoy with you. This is not for phonics practice but to build a love of stories and books.

## **Why This Approach Works**

- Children practise reading in a structured, supportive way.
- They are never asked to read books that are too hard for them.
- By focusing on decoding, fluency, and comprehension in turn, children become confident, fluent readers who also understand and enjoy what they read.


## **Little Wandle Phonics Progression: Phase 2 to Phase 6**

Children are taught phonics in a carefully structured order, building step by step so they can read and spell with increasing confidence. Below is an overview of what is taught in each phase and how this fits across Reception and Key Stage 1.

### **Reception**

#### **Autumn Term – Phase 2**

- Children are introduced to their first set of sounds (phonemes) and the letters that represent them (graphemes).
- They begin to blend sounds to read simple CVC words (e.g. sat, pin, dog).
- They learn some “tricky words” (words that can’t be sounded out in the usual way, e.g. the, to, I).
- Early sentence reading and writing begins.

 By the end of Phase 2, children can blend and read simple words using about 19 sounds.

### **Spring Term – Phase 3**

- Children learn more sounds, including digraphs (two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, th, ai, ee) and trigraphs (three letters making one sound, e.g. igh, ear).
- They continue to build fluency in blending for reading and segmenting for spelling.
- They learn more tricky words.
- They start to read and write simple sentences independently.

👉 By the end of Phase 3, children know most of the 44 phonemes in English and can read simple sentences.

### **Summer Term – Phase 4**

- No new sounds are taught — the focus is on consolidating knowledge from Phases 2 and 3.
- Children practise reading and spelling words with adjacent consonants (e.g. frog, swim, clap).
- They develop fluency and accuracy in longer words and sentences.

👉 By the end of Reception, most children can read short books, blend confidently, and write simple sentences.

## **Year 1**

### **Autumn Term – Phase 5 (Part 1)**

- Children learn alternative spellings for sounds they already know (e.g. the sound /ai/ can be written ai, ay, a-e).
- They also learn alternative pronunciations of graphemes (e.g. ow in snow and cow).
- They continue to learn more tricky words.

👉 Children now become more flexible in their reading, recognising that sounds can be written in different ways.

### **Spring & Summer Terms – Phase 5 (Part 2)**

- More alternative graphemes and tricky words are introduced.
- Focus on increasing fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.
- Children read a wide range of texts to apply their skills.

👉 By the end of Year 1, children should be fluent with Phase 5 and are assessed through the Phonics Screening Check (usually in June).

## **Year 2**

## **Phase 6 (all year)**

- Focus shifts from learning new sounds to spelling patterns and rules.
- Children learn about:
  - Adding suffixes (-s, -es, -ed, -ing, -er, -est, -ful, -ly, -ment, -ness).
  - Spelling rules (e.g. doubling consonants, dropping e before adding -ing).
  - Common exception words.
- They continue to develop fluency, accuracy, and comprehension in reading.

👉 By the end of Year 2, children should be fluent, confident readers who can apply their phonics knowledge to more complex spelling and writing.

We assess our children's reading progress each half term to ensure any gaps in knowledge are identified quickly. This process ensures we can put in place any interventions a child may need to become the reader we aspire for them to be.

## **Support for Children with Special Needs or Who Need Extra Help**

At our school, every child takes part in daily Little Wandle phonics lessons. However, some children may find learning to read more challenging or may need extra practice to keep up. Little Wandle provides clear strategies to make sure no child is left behind.

### **1. Keep-Up Sessions**

- If a child struggles to grasp a sound, word, or tricky word in the main lesson, they are given short, targeted “keep-up” sessions the same day.
- These sessions use the same structure and resources as the main lesson, but with more repetition and a slower pace.
- This helps children to secure the learning straight away before moving on.

### **2. Additional Small-Group or 1:1 Support**

- Some children receive extra practice sessions in small groups or one-to-one with an adult.
- These sessions focus on the specific sounds or skills the child is struggling with (e.g. blending, segmenting, tricky words).
- Regular review ensures that support matches the child's needs

### **3. SEND Support**

- For children with special educational needs, teaching is carefully adapted. This may include:
  - Breaking learning into smaller steps.
  - Using multi-sensory approaches (e.g. actions, visuals, tactile resources).
  - Giving more time and repetition.

- Close monitoring and individualised learning plans where needed.

#### **4. Regular Assessment**

- Teachers carry out frequent assessments to check which sounds and skills children know securely and where they need more help.
- This ensures that extra support is precisely targeted to fill gaps

#### **5. Reading Practice Books**

- Every child has a fully decodable reading book matched to their phonics knowledge.
- For children finding reading harder, this means they can experience success and build confidence, rather than being given a book that is too difficult.