

Phonics Policy

This policy reflects the school values and philosophy in relation to the teaching and learning of phonics. It sets out a framework within which teaching and non-teaching staff can operate and gives guidance on planning, teaching and assessment. This policy should be read alongside our Communication Policy as developing speaking and listening skills and developing phonic knowledge are inextricably linked.

The education White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (Nov 2010) states that the Government will:

Ensure that all children have the chance to follow an enriching curriculum by getting them reading early. That means supporting the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and introducing a simple reading check at age six to guarantee that children have mastered the basic skills of early reading and also ensure we can identify those with learning difficulties.

The independent review of early reading conducted by Jim Rose confirmed that 'high quality phonic work' should be the prime means for teaching children to read and spell words. The review also highlighted the importance of developing from the earliest stages children's speaking and listening skills, ensuring that beginner readers are ready to get off to a good start in phonic work by the age of 5. (Letters and sounds notes of Guidance 2007 pg 1)

Rose identified the most effective way of teaching phonics: Systematic: referring to the fact that there is not one specific method of teaching phonics but that the letters and sounds they relate to are taught in a specific sequence as opposed to incidentally or on a 'when needed' basis.

Synthetic: which is a method of teaching reading which first teaches the letter sounds and then builds up to blending these sounds together to achieve full pronunciation of whole words.

Phonics is simply a code that turns written language into spoken language and vice versa. It is the vital initial step in teaching children to read but it is far from the whole picture. Phonics will only work in an environment where Speaking and Listening Skills are promoted and developed.

For learning to read and spell we need much more than the alphabet. In the English spoken language around 44 phonemes can be identified but there are only 26 letters in the alphabet. Therefore, not only single letters but also groups of letters are used to represent the 44 phonemes. Children need to be taught the skills of blending and segmenting these phonemes and graphemes.

So what does this actually mean to the teaching of phonics and reading at Pear Tree School?

At Pear Tree, we have adopted the Letters and Sounds programme to introduce and teach phonics when appropriate to individual children. Following the Letters and Sounds programme, there is a big emphasis throughout our primary department on Phase 1 phonics. For all of our children the development of speaking and listening skills is central to their whole education so that they can access all other areas of their learning and social life. Without a good level of speaking and listening skills, children are not able to learn to read. (Please see communication policy) Aspects of Phase 1 phonics will be ongoing and embedded throughout the school day with more focused activities for those children who are ready. Phase 1 phonic activities are planned for by the class teacher and monitored by the Literacy leader.

For many of our pupils the teaching of systematic phonics is not appropriate and it is not possible to say at what age any of our children will be ready to start on Phase 2 phonics. Unlike in the Letters and Sounds Guidance, our children will, on the whole, not be ready to start Phase 2 phonics in their Reception Year but may be ready later on in their primary education. Regular ongoing assessments of pupils, Annual Reviews and yearly summative Assessments will identify those pupils who are ready to start on Phase 2 phonics and teachers will then plan either whole group or individual phase 2 phonic activities appropriate to their ability level. Planning and delivery of these phonic sessions will be monitored by the literacy leader. Although we follow the sequence of phonic content within the programme we do not follow the length of advised time as our children need repetition and over learning to acquire phonic knowledge and skills. Therefore, children will not progress through phase 2 phonics over a 6 week period but rather the class teacher will use their professional judgement and assessments to decide when to move a child on to the next set of sounds. Teachers will work alongside a nominated HLTA to support students in targeted phonics intervention. This will be agreed by the class teacher, HLTA and the Literacy leader.

Progression through the further 4 stages of the Letters and Sounds programme, if appropriate, will be on an individual basis. Teachers will use their professional judgement and formative assessments to determine whether an individual child is ready to move on to the next stage.

At Pear Tree School, we recognise the importance of teaching phonics but also recognise that many of our children will not learn to read phonically but rather will read on sight a range of words from memory. Throughout our primary department, children will be encouraged to continue to develop their phonic knowledge and skills and to use these to decode words. However, once pupils move into our secondary department, if they have not grasped the necessary phonic knowledge and skills to read, then they will be supported to develop their functional reading skills to enable them to be as independent as possible in their

adult life. Whatever reading strategy children use, reading for enjoyment and to gain information will be encouraged.

Phonics is only part of the process of children learning to read and as part of our daily curriculum, children will be immersed in a language rich and communication focused environment with books and stories shared for enjoyment at each individual child's level. Children will be encouraged to see and read words within their environment and within familiar texts. As both long term and working memory are crucial for children to become readers, all aspects of the daily curriculum throughout all subjects aims to develop pupils ability to explore and experience, develop anticipatory skills and remember events and actions over longer periods of time, all of which are pre-requisites to learning to read.

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the 3 year policy review cycle.

Policy Date: Summer 2021

Review Date: Summer 2024