



English at St Botolph's CofE Primary School

At St Botolph's Primary School, we recognise the importance of English in supporting children for them to 'Strive to be the best they can.' We understand that gaining and using skills in language not only affects a child's progress in school but also forms effective communicators, ambitious writers, fluent readers, and children that have the desire to learn. Our intent is that all of our pupils, irrelevant of their background or starting point, will be given the opportunity to develop their use of knowledge and understanding of spoken and written English, within a broad and balanced curriculum and with opportunities to consolidate and reinforce skills that have been taught.

Phonics Policy

2026

Date Issued: September 2026	Phonics Lead: Mrs K West
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The Vision

At St Botolph's, we aspire that every child be a successful, fluent reader by the end of Key Stage One and we believe that this is achievable through strong, quality teaching of reading skills. Our teaching will provide the children with a firm grasp of skills, regardless of their starting point, and will promote a love of reading. This is our vision as we know that if children have a lack of skills in this area, this can impact on other areas of learning and future career opportunities. The teaching of Phonics is the key strategy that is used to help our children to read, write and spell.

An Introduction

This policy describes our teaching of Phonics and outlines our aims, approaches, and the progression across year groups.

Our school offers a systematic, synthetic approach to phonics of which we are loyal to. This is based on the theories taken from the Rose Review which stated that 'Synthetic Phonics should be taught as the prime approach in learning to decode (to read) and encode (to write/spell) (2006). We have chosen and adopted the principles of Ruth Miskin's, 'Read, Write Inc' (RWI) programme as our teaching approach. This is a vigorous, enjoyable, lively programme of phonic work that we have embedded within our curriculum, and which meets the National Curriculum requirements (2014). In Read, Write Inc. Phonics lessons, children learn to read accurately and fluently with good comprehension and apply this knowledge to spell words.

Our Aims:

For reading accuracy, children learn to:

- Read new sounds and review previously taught sounds.
- Sound out the names of characters and unfamiliar words.
- Understand the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Read the story (first read)

For reading fluency, children learn to:

- Read the words in the story speedily.
- Track the story.
- Read the story with increased speed (second read)

For reading comprehension, children learn to:

- Predict the outcome, after listening to a story introduction.
- Discuss and compare key moments in the story.
- Read the story with a storyteller's voice (third read)
- Answer questions about the story.
- Read the same story at home.
- Build background knowledge, ready to read the matching 'book bag book' and sequential storybooks.

Implementation

Over the course of the programme, children learn the English alphabetic code: the 150+ graphemes that represent 44 speech sounds. They rapidly learn sounds and the letter, or groups of letters, they need to represent them, in three sets of Speed Sound lessons. Simple and enjoyable mnemonics help all children to grasp the letter-sound correspondence quickly, especially those who are at risk of making slower progress or those who are new to learning English. This knowledge is taught and consolidated every day in 30-minute sessions. High frequency words that are not phonetically regular are taught as 'red words' and are practised frequently.

Enjoyable phonic books are specifically matched to children's increasing knowledge of phonics so that early on, they experience plenty of success. Repeated readings of the texts support their increasingly fluent decoding.

Within our school, the Read Write Inc. programme is introduced in the Foundation Stage and is taught progressively through the terms that follow.

The Five Principles:

Children must pay attention to learn something new. However, they can only pay attention when:

- They can connect new learning with something they already know.
- They are only expected to learn one new thing at a time.
- They are challenged without feeling overwhelmed.
- They are emotionally engaged.

We follow the five core principles to teaching and learning. Our reading teachers must:

- Know the PURPOSE of every activity and share it with the children.
- Be PASSIONATE about teaching so they can engage the children.

- Teach at an effective PACE.
- Ensure that every child PARTICIPATES. We know that partner work is fundamental to this.
- PRAISE effort and progress.

Our Lessons

A typical 'Read Write Inc.' lesson includes the following elements, all with an aim to develop confidence in knowledge and skills:

Speed Sound lesson

To teach phonic sounds, we use the 'Speed Sounds' approach of the Read Write Inc. programme to teach all Set One, Two and Three sounds with the intention that they are read effortlessly and purely:

- *Set One Sounds:* These are sounds that promote the skill of blending. These sounds are taught from Term One in the Foundation Stage.
- *Set Two Sounds:* There are twelve set two 'Speed Sounds' that are made up of two or three letters which represent one sound. These sounds could be taught from Term Four of the Foundation Stage.
- *Set Three Sounds:* When learning their Set 3 speed sounds, they will be taught that there are more ways in which the same sounds are written. These sounds will be taught in Year One.
- *Additional Sounds:* These sounds are less common and have not been adapted by the Read Inc Programme. They are further alternative graphemes.

Reading Activities

To apply their phonics knowledge, we use reading activities, taken from the Read Write Inc. programme of work. These books are closely matched to the children's increasing knowledge of phonics and 'red' words and, as children re-read the stories, their fluency increases.

These activities include:

- Story green words
- Speedy green words
- Red word cards
- Partner practice
- Story introduction
- First read- children
- Read aloud- teacher
- Second read- children
- Third read- children
- Questions to discuss and answer

Progression of Skills

The grid below shows expectations of progress. We are aware that some children will make faster or slower progress and will act accordingly.

EYFS	Group	They can read:
Baseline	Group A	Fewer than 16 Set 1 single letter sounds
Autumn half term	Group B	More than 16 Set 1 single letter sounds
Autumn end of term	Group C	More set 1 single letter sounds and can blend sounds into words orally

Spring half term	Ditty	All Set 1 single letter sounds speedily. Can read most words.
Spring end of term	Red	All Set 1 sounds speedily. Can read most 'real' and 'nonsense' words.
Summer half term	Green	Can read most 'real' and 'nonsense' words.
Summer end of term	Green/Purple	Read most words in their head.

Year One	Group	They can read:
Baseline	Green	Can read most 'real' and 'nonsense' words.
Autumn half term	Purple	Read most words in their head.
Autumn end of term	Pink	Read Set 2 sounds speedily. Read most words in their head.
Spring half term	Orange	Read Set 2 sounds speedily. Read most words in their head.
Spring end of term	Yellow	Read most nonsense words and in their heads.
Summer half term	Yellow	Read most nonsense words and in their heads.
Summer end of term	Blue	Read Set 3 sounds speedily. Reads 60-70 words per minute. Attempts to read with intonation to show comprehension.

Year Two	Group	They can read:
Baseline	Blue	Read Set 3 sounds speedily. Reads 60-70 words per minute. Attempts to read with intonation to show comprehension.
Autumn half term	Blue	Read Set 3 sounds speedily. Reads 60-70 words per minute. Attempts to read with intonation to show comprehension.
Autumn end of term	Grey	Read Set 3 sounds speedily. Reads 70-80 words per minute. Attempts to read with intonation to show comprehension.
Spring half term	Grey	Read Set 3 sounds speedily. Reads 70-80 words per minute. Attempts to read with intonation to show comprehension.
Spring end of term	Comprehension	
Summer half term	Comprehension	
Summer end of term	Comprehension	

Making a Strong Start in the Foundation Stage

We know that children in the Foundation Stage learn more rapidly than any other stage in their lives so, we begin the teaching of phonics, from the first week, teaching one sound every day. The children are taught by trained staff and, from Autumn half term, are taught in homogeneous groups. We know that parental involvement is key. The children take home a 'Speed Sounds' book daily so that additional practice can take place and videos are shared via our communication platforms. In the Autumn Term, a parent meeting is held to provide information about early reading and to demonstrate teaching techniques.

Key Stage Two

For those children that still require it in key stage two, the teaching of phonics will not end for them. In Year Three and Year Four, children will continue to be assessed and grouped homogeneously.

Fresh Start

As children enter Year Five and Year Six, Read Write Inc. Fresh Start is a catch-up programme that we implement for children in Year Five and Six who are still learning to read. It offers a solution to accelerate reading progress in just 30 minutes a day. Pupils are taught at their challenge point, which means their learning will be accelerated so they will quickly learn to read. They will also develop good comprehension, spelling, and sentence structure through targeted activities.

Assessment and Grouping:

Our assessments are carried out by our RWI Assessors, supported and moderated by the RWI Leader. This ensures a consistent approach.

Children are assessed and grouped according to their phonic knowledge. Each child reads books that match their phonic knowledge. Ongoing assessment means that groups are constantly adjusted to ensure the best progress for each child.

In terms of the assessment trackers that we use, we use trackers from the Ruth Miskin School Portal and trackers that we have designed to further support our understanding of progress. We record their starting date and entry point on all trackers, to monitor the rate at which they are making progress. Using the School Portal also gives our RWI mentor, a member of Ruth Miskin's team the opportunity to look and offer advice and support. These trackers are based on numbers, not children's names. For our own tracking purposes, we have designed RWI trackers which are provided to Reading teachers and Class Teachers. These inform the names of children and the progress they are making, and it is clear whether they are making the expected progress as green shaded boxes indicate this.

Pupils are assessed at the end of every half term, six assessments in total, to ensure they are making progress and are assigned to the correct phonics group. This is using the RWI Online Assessment. We can also easily identify those who joined the programme later if they were new to the school, for example. We aim for all children to be accurate and fluent readers by the time they enter Key Stage 2. We have high expectations of our pupils' progress.

For those children with more profound learning needs, we use the 'small steps' tracker to assess reading progress. Every child in our school has the opportunity to learn to read.

One-to-one Tuition

All children can learn to read. However, we know that in some cases, children find it hard to pay attention when they work in a group or, some children may have a learning need that might mean they progress more slowly. To support our first 20% readers, we use the 'one-to-one' tuition programme to help these children make progress by giving them individual attention using the same Read, Write Inc. programme but with smaller teaching steps. This is described as 'keep up, not catch up.' These children are identified as quickly as possible. The adults that conduct this tuition are trained by the Ruth Miskin team and can continually develop their skills during Development Days or using the 'in action' videos, accessed on the portal. This intervention is daily and mostly short term.

Resources

The Read Write Inc. programme can be resourced and sustained at a reasonable cost. We have invested in the necessary resources to ensure that the programme can be taught effectively. These resources include reading books, movable working walls, and flashcards. It is the role of the Phonics Lead to ensure that all staff have the resources that they require and need.

Home reading

Our children will make the best possible progress if they read as often as possible. We do not expect that all parents or carers will be available to read with their children so we ensure that children take books home that they can read to their parent or carer. After

reading the Storybook three times during Phonics lessons, this book is taken home for the children to impress their carers with how well they can fluently and expressively read the book. In addition to this, the children will take home a RWI 'book bag book.' 'Book Bag Books' are stories that include many words and phrases that have been specifically taught in school and are paired to the Storybooks theme.

We may provide the children with the opportunity to further practice their phonics skills at home by 'Fred Games' or additional online RWI lessons. These are provided through QR codes, generated from the RWI Portal.

The Role of the RWI leader

The reading leader's role is to ensure that the programme is taught with fidelity and commitment. The key aspects of the role are to:

- Organise training.
- Build a team of excellent reading teachers.
- Monitor assessment of reading and to group children.
- Organise one-to-one tutoring.
- Provide practice sessions.
- Carry out coaching sessions.

The aim is to develop a team who can work together, practise together, talk together and give feedback to each other. Weekly meetings are a chance to achieve this.

As part of the RWI leader's role, in addition to the above, coaching is a tool used to observe lessons, up-skill reading teachers and share good practice. Coaching is carried out on a weekly basis. Pathways are then created to support teaching and learning.

Training:

We are a Ruth Miskin Training school. We work alongside a designated RWI trainer who monitors our progress and collaborates with us during 'Development Days' to ensure all our children make rapid progress. Speed Sounds training was undertaken by all staff members in September 2025. Regular training is provided using 'in action' films on the school portal and practice sessions are held weekly.

Impact

As a result of the knowledge and skills that we intend to and will implement within the school, our pupils will achieve well. This achievement will be reflected through application in reading and writing in the broader curriculum and beyond. In addition, this will be reflected in the data and tracking systems that we have in place. Using this information, we will know when pupils are ready for the next stage in their learning and act accordingly. In doing this, the children will be successful, fluent readers by the end of Key Stage One.