

PHONICS CURRICULUM

Phonics and Early Reading Policy



Every child reading • accurate decoding • growing fluency

Policy owner	Headteacher and Phonics Lead
Status	Proposed for adoption: September 2026
Review	Annual operational review • formal policy review by September 2029

CORE PRINCIPLE Phonics is the prime approach used to teach pupils to decode unfamiliar words. Daily, cumulative teaching and closely matched reading practice enable accurate decoding to become increasingly automatic.

1. Purpose and scope

This policy explains the school's approach to systematic synthetic phonics and early word reading from Reception to Year 2, with targeted catch-up for any older pupil who has not secured accurate decoding. It should be read with the Phonics Curriculum Overview, Reading and English curriculum documents, Assessment Policy, Feedback for Learning Policy, SEND arrangements and Guide to Phonics for Parents and Carers.

2. Intent and aims

- teach the alphabetic code in a clearly defined, cumulative sequence;
- develop rapid grapheme-phoneme correspondence recall and accurate blending for reading;
- teach segmenting and selection of graphemes for spelling;
- secure automatic recognition of taught common exception words;
- match decodable books and practice closely to pupils' secure phonics knowledge;
- identify pupils at risk of falling behind and provide prompt, precise catch-up;
- develop fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and enjoyment alongside decoding; and
- ensure staff and families use consistent terminology, pure pronunciation and prompts.

3. Chosen programme and reading books

Great Leighs uses Twinkl Phonics, a Department for Education validated systematic synthetic phonics programme. Staff teach the current Twinkl progression, terminology, lesson structure, assessment points and intervention resources with consistency and fidelity. Rhino Readers are the school's fully decodable books and are matched to the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and common exception words pupils have been taught securely.

Programme fidelity Staff maintain the taught order and agreed terminology. Supplementary activities enrich practice but do not replace direct teaching, introduce untaught code or encourage guessing from pictures or context.

4. Core knowledge and skills

Area	What pupils learn
Alphabetic code	Letters or groups of letters represent phonemes; phonemes may have alternative spellings and graphemes may have alternative pronunciations.
Blending	Recognise taught graphemes, say the phonemes and blend through the whole word to decode.
Segmenting	Say a spoken word, identify its phonemes and select graphemes to represent them for spelling.
Common exception words	Read and spell taught words containing an unusual or not-yet-taught correspondence.
Automaticity and fluency	Recall the code rapidly and reread successfully so attention can increasingly focus on phrasing, vocabulary and meaning.

5. Programme sequence and intended end points

Year / level	Teaching focus and intended end point
Reception • Level 2	Initial correspondences, oral blending and segmenting, CVC words and first common exception words; read simple words and captions.
Reception • Level 3	Wider consonant and vowel digraphs and trigraphs, two-syllable words and further common exception words; apply Levels 2–3 in sentences.
Reception • Level 4	Adjacent consonants, longer words and increasing fluency; apply Levels 2–4 in unfamiliar words and matched books.
Year 1 • Level 5	Alternative graphemes and pronunciations, increasingly complex words and common exception words; decode real and pseudo-words and read matched texts increasingly fluently.
Year 2 • Level 6	Spelling conventions, prefixes, suffixes and longer words; apply the alphabetic code independently and read age-appropriate text with sufficient fluency for comprehension.
Targeted catch-up	Teach from the earliest identified gap in phonemic awareness, correspondence knowledge, blending or fluency while maintaining access to age-appropriate language and comprehension.

Timing is indicative. Teachers use the programme's assessment points and consolidation opportunities without changing the taught order or lowering intended end points.

6. Daily teaching

Lesson stage	Core expectation
1. Revisit and review	Recall previously taught correspondences, common exception words and oral blending so knowledge remains accessible.
2. Teach	Introduce or clarify the new correspondence, skill or word through precise modelling and pure pronunciation.
3. Practise	Read and spell carefully selected words and sentences, with every pupil responding frequently.
4. Apply	Use the taught code in connected text, dictation or purposeful reading and writing.
Check and respond	Notice recall, blending, segmenting, spelling and participation; re-model, increase practice, adjust pace or provide support immediately.

7. Consistent teaching expectations

- Phonics is taught daily in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2; aligned catch-up continues in KS2 where required.
- Adults pronounce pure sounds, use agreed actions and terminology, model blending through the whole word and avoid guessing strategies.
- Practice contains the taught code and gives all pupils frequent opportunities to respond, read and spell.
- Knowledge is revisited cumulatively and applied in whole-class reading, writing and reading aloud to an adult.
- Staff receive training, coaching and programme updates so subject knowledge and delivery remain secure.

8. Reading practice with Rhino Readers

- Books are matched to secure phonics knowledge—not simply to age or general reading ability.
- Pupils decode accurately before rereading to develop automaticity, phrasing and expression.
- Adults prompt taught correspondences and blending through the word; pictures support meaning, not word guessing.
- Vocabulary and comprehension discussion follow successful decoding so meaning remains central.
- Home reading reinforces the same text, language and prompts used in school, while adults also read richer texts aloud.

Book matching A pupil should be able to read a matched book with a high level of accuracy. Where the code is not secure, teaching and book matching are adjusted rather than encouraging compensatory guessing.

9. Assessment and responsive teaching

Assessment identifies what a pupil knows and the next correspondence or skill requiring teaching. It informs grouping, practice, book matching and catch-up; it is not used to move pupils through the sequence before knowledge is secure.

Evidence	Use
Every lesson	Notice correspondence recall, oral blending, word reading, segmenting, spelling and participation; respond immediately.
Scheduled Twinkl checks	Assess cumulative correspondence knowledge, blending and application at programme assessment points and after consolidation.
Matched-book reading	Check transfer to connected text, accuracy, automaticity, phrasing and understanding.
Year 1 screening check	Administer the statutory check in June. Pupils who do not meet the expected standard receive continued support and retake it in Year 2.

10. Rapid catch-up

- Begin with the earliest insecure prerequisite rather than reteaching indiscriminately.
- Provide short, frequent, aligned sessions in addition to—not instead of—the pupil's main phonics and reading entitlement.
- Use the same correspondence language, pronunciation, routines and resources as the core programme.
- Review impact frequently and adjust content or intensity when progress is not rapid enough.
- Continue beyond Year 2, including in KS2, until accurate decoding and the alphabetic code are secure.

11. Inclusion and access

Teachers make participation accessible through seating, pace, enlarged resources, additional rehearsal, reduced distraction, visual support and carefully considered response methods. Adaptation retains the same phonics goal and does not substitute guessing for decoding. The teacher, SENDCO and phonics lead consider persistent difficulty, language and communication needs, hearing, vision and other barriers, involving families and external professionals where appropriate while maintaining ambitious expectations.

12. Partnership with parents and carers

- Share the current taught code, terminology and pronunciation so home practice reinforces school learning.
- Send home a Rhino Reader matched to secure knowledge and encourage calm, successful rereading.
- Explain blending, segmenting, common exception words and the Year 1 screening check clearly and without unnecessary pressure.
- Encourage adults to read aloud daily so pupils encounter rich vocabulary and texts beyond their independent decoding level.
- Invite families to speak to the class teacher early if reading practice becomes difficult or distressing.

13. Roles, monitoring and impact

Role	Responsibility
Governors	Assure programme fidelity, statutory compliance, inclusion and the impact of provision, including for vulnerable groups.
Headteacher / phonics lead	Maintain programme resources, training, assessment and screening arrangements; monitor teaching, book matching, catch-up and outcomes.
Teachers	Teach the sequence faithfully, assess responsively, match practice and books, communicate with families and act promptly on gaps.
Teaching assistants	Deliver aligned practice or intervention under teacher direction, use agreed routines and share precise observations.
Pupils and families	Engage with daily teaching and matched reading, use agreed prompts and communicate when support is needed.

Leaders evaluate daily teaching, staff knowledge, programme fidelity, book matching, catch-up, application, statutory outcomes and the progress of vulnerable groups. Impact is evident in increasingly automatic correspondence recall, accurate decoding of real and pseudo-words, segmenting, fluent matched-book reading and understanding. The school follows the current Twinkl guidance alongside the EYFS and National Curriculum for English; arrangements are reviewed annually and the policy by September 2029, or earlier following a significant change.