



PensMeadowSchool

Living, Growing, Learning

Phonics

JUNE 2024

NEXT REVIEW DATE: JUNE 2025



Staff Responsible: Tania Timmins

Disclaimer

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This policy should be followed in conjunction with our Reading Policy.

Context

Pens Meadow is a special school which offers places for 65 pupils aged 4 – 14 at our Ridge Hill site and 40 pupils aged 14 – 19 at our Pensnett site. We provide a quality education for pupils with complex needs, severe learning difficulties, including autism, and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently there are 35% of pupils on pupil premium. Therefore, it is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background and prepares our pupils with lifelong reading skills to support them through the rest of their educational career and beyond.

Intent

At Pens Meadow School, we believe that all our pupils are entitled to an education that will enable them to improve their quality of life and give them the skills they need to make sense of the world and achieve to the best of their abilities.

For pupils who are at the appropriate development level, this is why we teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. For pupils assessed at the appropriate development level, we start teaching phonics in Reception and follow the SEND Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

As a result, all our children on this pathway learn to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Pens Meadow School, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language development, through stories, drama and a total communication environment, for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

At Pens Meadow School we value reading as a crucial life skill. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Reading Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the SEND Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

Implementation

Pre- Phonics

These pupils experience a range of pre-phonics learning opportunities. These pupils focus on quality stories and nursery rhymes/ simple action rhymes with a sensory focus. Activities may include learning songs, experimenting with sounds or sensory experiences related to a story or rhyme.

Identified pupils within this pathway may begin 'What's in the box?' to prepare them for moving to Foundation for Phonics.

Pupils are tracked using our pre-phonics tracker which is split into seven stages:

- Environmental Sounds – develops an awareness of sounds around them and develops listening skills.
- Instrumental Sounds – develops awareness of sounds made by various instruments and sound makers.
- Body percussion – develops an awareness of sounds and rhythm.
- Rhythm and rhyme – develops an appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech.
- Alliteration – develops an ability to hear initial sounds.
- Voice Sounds – develops an ability to distinguish between vocal sounds and to hear separate sounds.

Foundations for phonics

We ensure children working within this pathway are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending before beginning to learn grapheme-phoneme correspondence. This is through:

- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes.
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending.
- attention to high-quality language.

Our pupils begin Foundations for Phonics once they are working on Rhythm and Rhyme in Pre-phonics and continue to work on Pre-phonics alongside Foundation for Phonics.

Daily phonics lessons

We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day for four days a week. This included two days of 30-minute phonics lessons and two days of 15 minutes phonics and 15 minutes reading decodable books. This enables all pupils to access the programme in a developmentally appropriate manner whilst meeting developmental concentration and attention levels.

SEND pathway

Pupils who have been assessed as ready to begin systematic, synthetic phonics follow the SEND pathway. There is provision within the pathway to meet children's needs by progressing at the appropriate pace identified, chunking and revisiting and reviewing learning before moving on.

Main programme

Within our school there are a small, identified group of pupil who are able to access the main Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme. These lessons may be chunked to meet the needs of the pupils and repeated as necessary before moving on.

We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress for SEND pupils:

- Pupils are taught from the simple to more complex GPCs, as well as taking into account the frequency of their occurrence in the most commonly encountered words.
- All the graphemes taught are practised in words, sentences and, later on, in fully decodable books.
- Children review and revise GPCs and words daily, weekly and across terms and years, in order to move this knowledge into their long-term memory.

Teaching reading:

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions two times a week.

These:

- are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately 1- 3 children
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised SEND assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of 'Application of phonics to reading'.
- are focused on decoding, prosody and comprehension.

Pre-Phonics

These pupils have two reading sessions a week and focus on Reading for Pleasure. This gives pupils opportunities to read in very small groups with an adult developing their language and their attention and responses to stories.

Foundation for phonics

Pupils who do not yet confidently recognise s,a,t,p,i,n and are either on the Foundation for phonics pathway or just beginning SEND Phase 2:

- Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. Planning for wordless books is used for these groups.
- Week 1 – Wordless books session 1
- Week 2 – Wordless books session 2
- Week 3 - Wordless books session 3

Pupils have the same focus for the week so that they have opportunities to revisit and overlearn skills before moving on.

Reading practice sessions twice a week

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- decoding
- prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
- comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.

Children keep the same book for 3 weeks and focus on one area each week:

- Week 1 – Decoding
- Week 2 – Prosody
- Week 3 – Comprehension

This enables pupils to have opportunities to revisit and overlearn skills before moving on.

Home reading

The decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.

Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the Everybody Read! resources.

We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops.

We have opportunities throughout the day for children to read their books 1:1 with a member of staff to support their progress.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- All members of teaching staff including our SNSWs and SLT have been trained to teach reading, so we have the same expectations. We all use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.
- Weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.
- Lesson templates, Prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- The Reading Leader and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Ensuring reading for pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002)

'The will influences the skill and vice versa.' (OECD 2010)

We value Reading for Pleasure highly and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the pupils at Pens Meadow and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. We curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books.
- Across school, pupils have access to the reading corner every day and the books are refreshed whilst giving pupils opportunities to develop favourites and make choices.
- All pupils at Ridge Hill have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school.
- Each class visits the local library every half term and parents are invited to a least one of these visits.
- Books are supported with 'How to Help' leaflets differentiated to support different development levels and ALDs for non-verbal pupils.
- The school library is made available for classes to use at protected times. It must be booked via the school booking system. Children across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events (book fairs, author visits and workshops, national events etc).
- We use the Everybody read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

Impact

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

Pre-phonics

- Assessment for learning is linked to the statements for the pre-phonics tracker. This is updated across a 6-week period ready for summative assessments.
- Summative assessment is collected every six weeks to identify gaps and ensure pupils are still in appropriate groups.

Phonics

- Assessment for learning is used daily within class to identify children needing to revisit, review or be retaught specific sounds.
- Summative assessment for all pupils following the phonics scheme takes place every six weeks to assess progress and to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed. Following this, pupil may move groups to ensure that the pitch of learning is appropriate for their next steps.
- Pupils who have learnt all the sounds in the Little Wandle SEND scheme are assessed using the Year One Phonics test. If they score a pass on the text they move onto out SPAG pathway. These children continue to develop their fluency and comprehension in reading whilst also focusing on year one spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Any pupil who starts Pens Meadow will have a phonics assessment within two weeks of starting. More information about baselines can be found in our Assessment Policy.

Statutory assessment

- Due to the development and cognitive levels of the pupils at Pens Meadow, our pupils are disapplied from the year one phonics test.