

St John's Catholic Primary School,

Bridgnorth



Phonics Policy

Written on: 02.06.2025

Reviewed by: Mrs E Shimmons

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Introduction

At St John's, we use Twinkl Phonics as our systematic, synthetic phonics programme (SSP). It is high quality and robust in its purpose. With a clear, structured progression through the programme, it allows all of our pupils to meet or exceed the expected standard.

The Twinkl Phonics approach combines rigorous progression with engaging learning materials. We believe that children learn best when they are enjoying their learning and that this comes from a mix of bright, fun and engaging lesson resources within a clear and systematic approach that builds on children's skills daily.

Intent

At St John's, we are committed to ensuring that every child becomes a confident and fluent reader and writer. We deliver high-quality phonics teaching through the *Twinkl Phonics Programme*, a coherently planned and sequenced scheme that supports effective phonics instruction from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through Key Stage 1 and, where necessary, Key Stage 2.

Through the delivery of the Twinkl Phonics Programme, we aim for all children to become confident and independent readers and writers, develop a lifelong love of reading and writing and build resilience, confidence, and engagement in phonics lessons.

Implementation

The dynamic and engaging materials delivered in the daily lesson packs within Levels 2-6 ensure a clearly defined structure to the teaching of phonics. The direct teacher-led lessons enable all learners to develop and apply new skills, while also providing opportunities to further apply these skills within fun and engaging activities and through continuous provision. The lesson presentations, stories, games, additional texts and toolkits are meticulously planned to allow children to apply and practise phonics skills.

The structure of every Twinkl Phonics lesson follows this familiar five-part structure to ensure that the four cornerstones of phonics are covered. During our phonics lessons, children will repeat the elements from the four cornerstones of phonics to ensure that they have rapid and automatic recall of GPCs and tricky/common exception words; each day, they will experience blending and segmenting activities to allow regular practice of these core skills.

Year R, Year 1 and Year 2 will use the lesson presentations, workbooks and reading minibook.

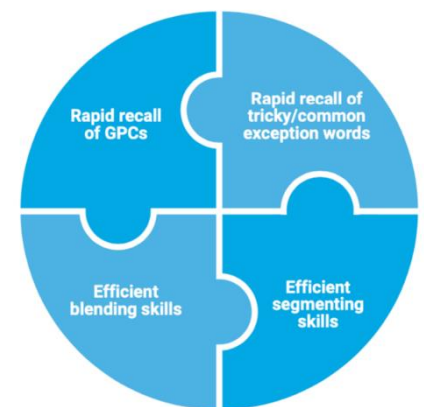
Year R and Year 1 will use Kit and Sam dolls to support phonics learning.

Year R and Year 1 will use robot rick arms for segmenting.

Year R, Year 1 and Year 2 will use twinkl handwriting to support letter formation.

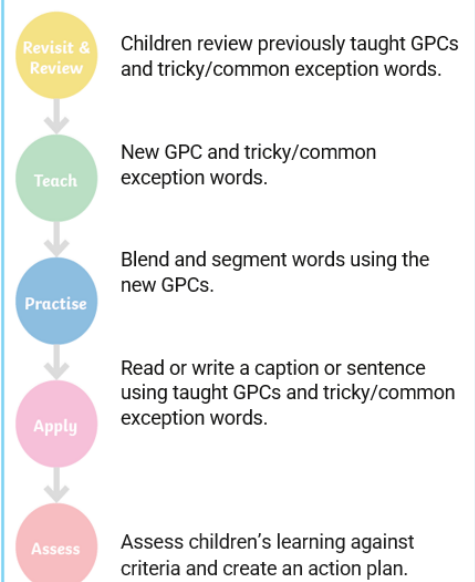
Year R, Year 1 and Year 2 will use twinkl grammar hand actions where necessary.

Please see our phonics progression document to see the different levels of phonic knowledge.



Four Cornerstones of Phonics

Each lesson follows the 5 part structure:



Terminology

Phoneme: smallest unit of sound in words. At St John's we use phoneme and 'sound' interchangeable due to the phonics scheme references.

Grapheme: the written representation of a sound in words. At St John's we use grapheme and letter interchangeable due to the phonics scheme references. (letter links to alphabet/handwriting).

Digraph: two letters making one sound – we call these – **partners**.

Trigraph: three letters making one – we call these – **a team**.

Spilt digraph: two letters making one sound that are divided by a consonant – we call these-**cheeky partners**.

Alternative sounds: Alternative graphemes refer to graphemes that make the same sound but are spelt differently such as ea or ee.

Sound Family: link to displays and teaching of alternative sounds. ea, ee, y e-e, ie and ey are in 'ee' sound family.

Segment: joining individual speech sounds together to read a word. **We use robot arms for segmenting.**

Blending: breaking down words into individual speech sounds to spell a word.

Tricky Words: Words that are difficult to sound out because they don't follow regular spelling patterns or because they contain graphemes the children haven't learnt yet, e.g. said, the, because. They are referred to as 'tricky words' in Levels 2, 3 and 4 of Twinkl Phonics and then they are referred to as Common Exception Words or CEWs in Levels 5 and 6. This is to ensure we are using age-appropriate terminology

Alien Words: Words that include sounds that the children have learnt which are not real, e.g. 'gleeb' or 'zum'. These are also referred to as 'pseudo' or 'nonsense' words. Alien words are included in the year 1 Phonics Screening Check, a test completed by all year 1 children in June each year, as a way of assessing their ability to blend sounds into words.

Sound Buttons: Circles or spots that can be written underneath a sound to support reading. Digraphs and trigraphs can often be identified by having a line underneath them called a sound bar. Children are taught to say the sound as they touch the sound button or bar underneath each phoneme.

Reception

As St John's does not have a nursery attached to its school building, we like to spend our transition days and settling in week in September to ensure children are secure in their Level 1 areas. Throughout Level 1, young learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to use and discriminate between auditory, environmental and instrumental sounds through 7 Aspects. Level 1 is taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage and underpins learning throughout the teaching of Levels 2-6. Reception will cover level 2, level 3 and a five week block of Level 4.

Year One

Year One will cover level 4 and level 5. This covers alternative phonemes whilst teaching new tricky words and common exception words.

Year Two

Year two will cover level 6. Level teaches more alternative phonemes. This links with regular spellings, common exception words, and grammar lessons.

Key Stage 2

For those children who are working below age-related expectations, phonics learning should not end in KS1. If, through assessment and observation, teachers have decided that a child needs further phonics intervention, Twinkl Decoders will be used. It is a comprehensive and scripted intervention programme, specifically designed for KS2 pupils to close the gap and develop essential reading and writing skills.

Impact

In reception, year 1 and year 2, children should be assessed on their knowledge of GPCs and tricky/common exception words each half-term, to establish their phonic level. Blending and segmenting assessments should also be carried out to ensure that children have the skills securely in place for reading and spelling. Year One and children in Year two who are resitting the phonics screening test with complete a phonics screening test once every term in preparation.

Inclusion/ Intervention

Supporting the Lowest 20% Achievers

Regular assessment is vital to ensure the early identification of children who may need us to provide them with extra support, either through interventions or during daily classroom teaching. Ideally, these children will take part in daily, highly structured interventions, which will normally include recapping or relearning missing GPCs and tricky/common exception words and practising blending and segmenting skills. As soon as we identify any child who is struggling to succeed in phonics, the provision will be put into place to close the gap. We also identify children who do not learn through phonics and explore how we can support those children.

Extending and Challenging Fast Learners

Regular assessment is also vital to ensuring the early identification of children who may need us to challenge them further, either through extension activities or during daily classroom teaching.

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

In the summer term, all children in year 1 will undertake the National Phonics Screening Check. This is an assessment carried out in school during which the children will be assessed on their ability to segment and blend a range of 40 real and 'alien' words. Alien words are a selection of phonetically decodable nonsense words. The words in this assessment gauge the children's understanding of the phonemes learnt and give the school the knowledge of where the gaps are. If the children are not secure in recognising, segmenting and blending these words and therefore do not pass the assessment, they will be offered further support as they enter year 2 and will be able to repeat the assessment in the summer term of year 2. This assessment also allows us to put in specific and personal support for those children who require additional assistance. If a child does not meet the expected standard in year 2, then phonics teaching and learning will be continued into key stage 2.

SENCo

At St John's, effective communication with our SENCo is central to our approach in ensuring every child progresses in their phonics skills. When a pupil appears to be falling behind, a SEN concern is documented on CPOM's. At this point, the SENCo will monitor the child closely to assess for any additional needs. This process ensures that appropriate, timely support and interventions are provided to help the child succeed in their phonics development. Communication will continue with the SENCo and updates will be given.

Displays

All EYFS and Key Stage 1 classrooms (Year R, Year 1, and Year 2) will have a dedicated phonics display to support children's learning. These displays should:

- Include all newly taught phonemes and graphemes.
- Clearly show the *sound of the day/week* as a focal point for learning and reinforcement.
- Display newly introduced *tricky words* to support recognition and recall.
- Be updated regularly to reflect current learning and ensure relevance.
- Be interactive or child-friendly where appropriate, encouraging pupil engagement and independence.

The display serves as a visual aid for daily teaching and a reference point for pupils during reading and writing activities.

KS2 will display or have on tables for all to access are twinkl 'sound families'.

KS2 are not expected to have phonics displays in their classrooms, however, if a child takes part of the intervention programme 'decoders' then that child is expected have sufficient resources on their table/pencil case/learning pack.

Home Learning Expectations

Parental involvement is key in the acquisition of phonics and supports us in developing a cohesive whole-school approach. A phonics workshop for Reception parents is held in the autumn term and a mini workshop takes place as part of Class Curriculum Meetings for Year One and Year Two. During these sessions, we will be sharing information on techniques, such as saying pure sounds and blending. We will also share support resources regularly, such as the parent information sheets, as these can help ensure that parents and carers are using the same strategies at home as the children are learning in school.

Each week two phonically decodable rhino reading books are also sent home for parents to support their child's phonics/reading. At St John's we also have other decodable reading books to support the Twinkl scheme, these are called our 'additional books'. Reception will complete the weekly Activity Mat, Year One and Year Two will have phonic spellings, reading plus a phonics additional activity.

Our decodable Rhino Readers reading books make sure children are well prepared to read, containing a 'before reading' page which allows children to rehearse the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and tricky/common exception words they will meet in the text. The sound cards match the Twinkl Phonics mats, providing familiarity, and there are also blending practice activities, containing focus words with sound buttons.

The 'after reading' activities are designed to encourage discussion, recall, sequencing, comprehension and inference at a level appropriate to the text.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback

Monitoring will be achieved through:

- Work scrutiny via pupil books.
- Learning walks.
- Observations.
- Pupil voice.
- Teacher voice.

- Reflective teacher feedback.
- Learning environment monitoring.

Feedback on whole school areas of development regarding computing to be fed back through insets/AOB/staff meetings.