



Phonics and Early Reading Policy

Policy Review and Approval

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A copy of this policy and other related policies can be obtained from the School Office.

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The context of our school

Gildredge House was established in 2013 as a Free School and provides for a range of age groups from Reception to Year 11. The Primary phase is two form entry with most students being from a White British background. The proportion of students with SEND is in line with the national average and the proportion of disadvantaged students is below the national average. The percentage of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is 22%.

At Gildredge House, we believe that every student can learn to read fluently and with understanding, and that a rich culture of reading for pleasure underpins success across the curriculum and beyond. Our vision is that we aspire for every student to become enthusiastic and motivated readers.

We aim for students to:

- **Crack the alphabetic code** through a high-fidelity, systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 (and for older students who need it).
- **Develop fluency and prosody**, moving from accurate decoding to automaticity and expressive reading.
- **Comprehend and enjoy texts** across the curriculum and read widely for **pleasure and purpose**.
- **Access a sequenced English curriculum** that meets National Curriculum aims for reading and language.

These ambitions are consistent with the DfE Reading Framework and National Curriculum aims.

Reading and early reading are prominent within the Primary phase English curriculum, supported by class reading areas, a well-stocked Primary phase library and whole class reading sessions. We actively engage in a strong culture of daily reading and reading for pleasure across the school.

Implementation

We use Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised. Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised is a DfE validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Programme. The programme follows a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics that begins in Reception and continues through to Year 2, with additional intervention for students in Year 2 and above, where necessary. It promotes clear, high expectations on the development of reading, through the teaching of recognising and reading tricky words from sight, decoding words to read, as well as teaching/learning spelling rules. Additionally, the programme has clear GPC (grapheme-phoneme correspondence) progression to support the teaching and learning of reading.

At Gildredge House, we recognise the importance of transferring knowledge into long-term memory. The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised structure embeds learning through repetition/use of key mantras which allow students to consistently apply their learnt phonetic knowledge, supporting the transference from short-term to long-term memory. Therefore, in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 phonics is taught daily, with Year 2 moving into spelling for those who have secured the phonetic code.

Integrated into the programme is the use of high-quality reading books that are published by Harper Collins (Big Cat Books). The books not only provide access to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books but match each grapheme the students are learning. This offers an opportunity for the students to read decodable books, tricky words, apply their phonetic knowledge in context and get exposure to new vocabulary. The texts are used in group reading

sessions and have high-quality, well-structured planning to support the development of decoding, prosody, and comprehension.

Also embedded within the programme are 6-weekly assessments which support teachers to identify any students who require extra support and how best to support those students. The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments, alongside assessment within the daily lesson(s) identify students in Reception and Year 1 who need either individual or group keep-up sessions to support students who might be at risk of falling behind the programme. The Phase 5 Review Assessment in Year 2 identifies students who need to follow the Rapid Catch-up programme or who are ready to move onto Little Wandle Spelling and Little Wandle Fluency.

All staff at Gildredge House receive intensive training and receive further annual refresher training to ensure the delivery of high quality phonics and reading sessions and productive use of assessment and keep-up sessions.

Foundations for Phonics in Reception and Year 1

Students in Reception and Year 1 receive a daily phonics lesson for 20-30 minutes. Students in Reception begin their phonics sessions once they complete their transition sessions to Gildredge House. They are taught to read and spell words by using taught Phase 2 and Phase 3 GPCs and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.

Students in Year 1 review Phase 3 and Phase 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily keep-up lessons ensure every student learns to read

- Any student who needs additional practice has daily keep-up support, taught by a fully trained member of staff. Keep-up lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources, and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every student secures their learning.
- Phonics lessons/sessions are timetabled for any student in Year 2 or Year 3 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the keep-up resources - at pace, until they are ready to move onto the Little Wandle Spelling and Little Wandle Fluency programme(s).
- If any student in Years 4-6 has gaps in their phonetic knowledge when reading or writing, we plan small group and/or individual support sessions/lessons to address specific reading/writing gaps. These sessions last around 10 minutes and take place as required to bridge attainment gaps throughout the week.

Planning

Each phonics lesson in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 includes the following sections:

- Revisit and Review: overlearn the previous graphemes, words, tricky words.
- Teach and Practise: introduce a new grapheme using catchphrase. Practise reading words.
- Practise and Apply: read sentences and practise spelling with new grapheme.
- Assess: teacher to assess throughout lesson for assessment for learning. Some students may need catch-up support or individual 1:1 support throughout the day if not on track.

The Weekly Content Grid(s) 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.

Teaching reading: reading practice sessions

Students in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2, are taught to read by them participating in Reading Practice Sessions/Fluency Sessions 2-3 times a week.

These sessions:

- Are taught by a fully trained member of staff to small groups of approximately six students.
- Use books matched to the students' secure phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments and book matching grids.
- Are monitored by the Class Teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

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

- Decoding.
- Prosody: teaching students to read with understanding and expression.
- Comprehension: teaching students to understand the text.

In Reception, these sessions start in Week 4. Students who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books. In Year 2, we continue to teach reading in this way for any student who still needs to practise reading with decodable books. In addition to this, Year 2 children will also receive regular Whole Class Reading sessions.

Home Learning

Each student in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 (where appropriate) receives a decodable reading practice book containing as many of the tricky words and sounds of the week for students to practise at home.

Reception:

- Decodable reading practice books are changed weekly.
- Students also take home a Reading for Pleasure book from their class library.
- Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Home Learning Sheets shared termly to engage families and share information about phonic learning.
- Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised resources are sent home weekly to engage families and share information about phonic learning.
- Parent meetings are held for parents which outline how we teach phonics and how they can support their child when reading and writing at home.

Year 1:

- Decodable reading practice books are changed weekly.
- Students take home a Reading for Pleasure book from their class library box.
- Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Home Learning Sheets shared termly to engage families and share information about phonic learning.
- Parent meetings are held for parents which outline how we teach phonics and how they can support their child when reading and writing at home.
- Parents are invited to attend a workshop on the Year 1 Phonics Screening test.

Year 2:

- Where level appropriate, students take home decodable reading practice books which are changed accordingly.
- Students take home appropriately levelled books to support their reading knowledge and ability which are changed weekly.
- Students take home a Reading for Pleasure book from their class library box.

Additional reading support for Vulnerable Children

- If needed, we use the Little Wandle SEND Programme to support those students identified as needing additional support in school and who are below ARE (age-related

expectations). The programme mirrors the main Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Phonics programme but makes reasonable adaptations to support and meet the needs of the students. The SEND Programme is used within the Sunrise/Sunset rooms.

- Students in Reception and Year 1 recognised as below ARE receive individual or group keep-up sessions to bridge gaps in learning.
- Students in Year 2 recognised as below ARE receive Rapid-Catch-up sessions to bridge gaps in learning.
- Students in Year 3 who did not pass the Phonics Screening Test re-take in Year 2 will be assessed on the Little Wandle Rapid-Catch-up Placement Assessment to identify area(s) for support and intervention.
- Students in Years 4-6 recognised as below ARE will access one or more of the following Literacy interventions:
 - Lexia;
 - Fluency into Comprehension;
 - 1:1 Daily Readers; or
 - BRP (Boosted Reading Programme).

In addition to this, our Whole Class Reading curriculum (developed from FRED's Reading) has a focus on developing fluency, and all students will have a chance to practise developing their reading fluency within these sessions.

- YARC assessments and the Schonell Reading Age assessment are additional assessment tools used for students in Years 4-6 accessing 1:1 intervention to identify the reading need and next steps for the student.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progression

- Every teacher has been trained to teach reading following the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds SSP Programme, ensuring all staff have the same high expectations for progress.
- All staff use the same mantras (language), routines, and resources to teach the students to read effectively and consider 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, grapheme/mnemonic cards, and 'How to' videos ensure all teachers have a consistency approach and structure for each lesson, with online materials always available to bridge gaps/consolidate knowledge.
- The teaching of reading is monitored and observed by the Phonics and Early Reading Leader.

Ensuring Reading for Pleasure

We value Reading for Pleasure highly, and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure Pedagogy:

- We encourage our students to engage in a range of different texts by ensuring a range of fiction and non-fiction books are available for reading independently or with peers/staff.
- We engage in Storytime/read to our students daily; carefully selecting the books that are shared with the students to ensure the students have experience and exposure to high-quality text, that also reflect and explore our local community, wider worlds, and different cultures.
- Every Year Group has a reading area that encourages a love and enjoyment for reading. We curate these books and talk about them to entice students to read a wide range of books. We allocate funding to update these books accordingly.
- We have a range of book displays that promote Reading for Pleasure.
- Teachers share their current Reading books with students, and these are displayed in each classroom.

- Students have access and exposure to a range of different text types, for example, audible stories, self-scan QR code stories, filmed stories/read online, paperback/hardback stories, and Yoto.
- In all classes, students have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed. Staff model Reading for Pleasure during these free flow sessions.
- Students from Reception through to Year 6 have access to Boom Reader to record reading in school and at home. Parents are encouraged to record comments about books they are reading or reading time to share with the staff in school. As students progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments using Boom Reader to record books and keep a list of the books/authors they have read.
- Class libraries, Working Walls, and Information Stations, and the Primary phase Library are used regularly.
- Only Big Cat levelled reading books are used which support our Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Phonics Scheme. Students can access and take home Big Cat Collin's Levelled reading books from our Big Cat Library.
- Students have access to the Big Cat Online Library which provides access to bespoke levelled reading books.
- Students across the school have regular opportunities to engage with a wide range of Reading for Pleasure events to include, but not limited to: Book Fairs, Author Visits and Workshops, National Events, Library Visits, and World Book Day.

Book care responsibilities

To support our Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Phonics Programme we use Big Cat levelled reading books which are designed to foster a love of reading and support phonics development.

To ensure these valuable resources are well-maintained and available for all students, we promote responsible borrowing, proper handling, and care of the books.

- Children are encouraged to handle books carefully and respectfully.
- Each student is given a 'reading pack' consisting of a plastic wallet. The reading pack should be used to protect the book from damage, such as water, spills, or tearing.
- Parents are asked to support children in maintaining the books' condition and to report any issues promptly.
- If a book is damaged or lost, there is a charge to replace the book.

Impact

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

Assessment for learning in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 is used:

- Daily within Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Phonic sessions to identify students who need keep-up support.
- Weekly in Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Phonic review lessons which assess gaps in learning, and secure fluency of GPCs, words, and spellings.

Summative Assessment in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 is used:

- Every 6 weeks to assess student progress and identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed. Further to identify students who need additional support and to plan the appropriate keep-up support that the students need (Little Wandle Assessment).
- By the Senior Leadership Team and scrutinised through Little Wandle Assessment Tracker to narrow the attainment gap between different groups of students and to ensure any additional support is put in place.

YARC assessments are an additional assessment tool used for students accessing 1:1 intervention which identify the reading need and next steps for each student. Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Placement Assessment is used in Years 1 and 2 with a new student to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and how to best support their learning.

Assessment for learning in Years 3-6 is used:

- In regular Whole Class Reading Curriculum sessions which use assessment for learning strategies such as:
 - Using open-ended questions to probe understanding e.g. “Why do you think the character acted that way?”
 - Encouraging students to justify their answers with evidence from the text.
 - Using think-pair-share or no hands up questioning to involve all students.
 - Providing immediate verbal feedback in whole-class reading sessions.

Summative Assessment in Years 3-6 is used:

- At the end of each term using PiXL Assessment. FFT Reading-Age Assessments are also used.

Statutory Assessment

- Students in Reception complete the Literacy Baseline.
- Students in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any student who does not pass the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1 is required to re-sit the assessment in Year 2, unless formally exempt.

Students in Year 1 and Year 2 identified as being at risk of not passing the Phonics Screening Test are offered Early Morning Phonic Sessions to support their phonetic development. The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds mantras are used in these sessions.

References

This policy is informed by and aligned with:

- The Reading Framework (DfE) - guidance for the teaching of reading from Reception to Year 9, including SSP, fluency, comprehension, leadership and the culture of reading for pleasure.
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework - for school-based providers.
- National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study (KS1 & KS2).
- Phonics Screening Check - Standards and Testing Agency (STA) Assessment & Reporting Arrangements (ARA) and annual Administration Guidance.
- SEND Code of Practice (0-25 years) - statutory guidance for SEND identification.
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), for use from November 2025.
- OECD Reading for Change, Performance and Engagement across Countries.