



Phonics Curriculum Statement



"When I read great literature, great drama, speeches, or sermons, I feel that the human mind has not achieved anything greater than the ability to share feelings and thoughts through language." James Earl Jones

Intent

At Vallis First School, we recognise reading as a key life skill, which underpins access to the rest of the curriculum. We aim for children to read words and simple sentences by the end of Reception; become successful, fluent readers by the end of Key Stage 1 and develop a lifelong love of reading as they move through school. The systematic teaching of synthetic phonics is given a high priority throughout Early Years and Key Stage 1. We value and encourage pupils to read for enjoyment and recognise that this starts with the foundations of acquiring letter sounds, segmenting and blending skills. By equipping children with these key skills they will be able to complete the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 which serves as a useful checkpoint rather than as an end in itself. We want children to enjoy success and gain confidence from a positive experience.

Implementation

Delivery

Daily phonics lessons are delivered to all children in whole class groups. When new sounds are being introduced, they are taught at a rate of four per week with a review on Friday. Each lesson begins with a review section where children practise reading previously seen sounds, decodable words and tricky words. The new sound is introduced and then children apply this new knowledge by reading and writing words containing the sound. Finally, children are extended by reading and writing captions and sentences when they are ready.

Structure of Phonics Teaching

Consistency of approach to teaching phonics is ensured by following our chosen scheme; Unlocking Letters and Sounds (ULS). This scheme has been carefully selected to meet the specific needs of the school. ULS specifies a clear order of progression in which new sounds and skills are taught. By using this scheme throughout the school, the structure and methodology of our lessons is consistent in Reception and Year 1 and even into Year 2.

Assessment and Support

Throughout each phonics lesson, teachers and support staff carefully observe and assess children so extra support can be offered where needed. Phonics is not confined to the discrete phonics sessions and is incorporated in cross-curricular learning throughout the school. All teaching staff understand the expectations of the curriculum and skilfully use both planned interventions and spontaneous opportunities to further embed phonics knowledge.

As well as ongoing formative assessment, we also monitor individual progress and begin to plug any gaps as soon as they appear. When children find phonics challenging, it is often either because of blending or recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. Teachers analyse where children need extra support and provide targeted interventions as outlined in our scheme; Unlocking Letters and Sounds. By adopting a rigorous approach to the learning of phonics right from the start, we best enable the majority of children to 'keep up, not catch up'.

All teaching staff are trained in teaching and supporting phonics and the phonics lead regularly monitors lessons and interventions to ensure consistent, good practice.

Year 2

As children move into Year 2, they continue to develop their reading and writing skills by learning a wider range of spelling rules. Some children may be identified by the end of Year 1 phonics screening check as needing ongoing practise with phonics into Year 2. These children will be given additional support to enable all children to reach their full potential by the end of Key Stage 1. They will have strong foundations in reading for moving into Lower Key Stage 2.

Reading Books

We want children to experience success in reading as soon as possible. For this reason, we have a carefully matched selection of decodable books which children read in school and are sent home for children to practise further.

Children are only given books which contain sounds they have already learnt. Children read with an adult in school at least once a week. They are encouraged to re-read their decodable book at least 3 times, for decoding, fluency and prosody, before changing to a new text. Children also take part in either whole class or small group reading lessons as well as having daily opportunities to read from their own book bag.

Parental Communication

Use of book bags is consistent throughout the school. Children are required to have a book bag which is brought to school every day. The book bag contains a Yellow Reading Record in which school staff and home adults can record what has been read by a child; a sharing book for the adult to read and a decodable phonics reading book. Parents are kept up to date of the new sounds being introduced and 'Learning to Read with Phonics' sheets are given weekly to children in Year 1 and Reception. Soon after starting in Reception, parents are given a presentation informing them about how reading is taught in the school.

Impact

As a result of high- quality phonics provision:

- Children make good progress from their starting points. Progress data is collected and recorded by our Phonics Lead. Progress data can be viewed and passed onto new teachers at the end of academic years to smooth transition with the identification of the bottom 20%.
- The vast majority of children are ready for the next stage in their education as they transfer through Early Years, Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2.
- Children enjoy listening to adults read and develop a love of reading.
- They begin to develop knowledge of favourite stories and authors.
- They gain satisfaction from their growing success in developing independence and fluency. We believe that reading is the key to all learning and so the impact of our phonics and reading curriculum goes beyond the results of the statutory assessments and can be seen in success across the curriculum as children progress through school and move on to Key Stage 2.

Curriculum Lead: Tracey Messenger

Phonics Lead: Jo Higgins