

Phonics and Early Reading Policy



Black Firs School

“I have a passion for teaching kids to become readers, to become comfortable with a book, not daunted. Books shouldn’t be daunting, they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives life-long advantage.”

Roald Dahl

“There is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking, and an art of writing”

Disraeli

Introduction

At Black Firs we believe that in our ever-changing modern world, reading remains a vital life-long learning skill for *all*; you can’t access our culture, unless you can read. The ability to decode printed word unlocks a world of opportunity and enables our children to interact and engage with their environment.

We believe that impactful learning needs to happen holistically. We need to make reading relevant and enjoyable for our children so they gain an individual understanding of how it makes an impact on their daily lives.

It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to *all* learners, regardless of background. Careful tracking of each cohort ensures that every child has equal opportunity to become a proficient reader regardless of SEND, Pupil Premium, mobility, attendance or EAL.



Creative Process

We use this creative process in *all* our learning so that children have a common creative approach to our curriculum at Black Firs.

This creative process, applied to early Reading, is interpreted from speaking & listening to *Understand* how sounds are connected to print. **Recording**; constructing meaning from print linking the letter squiggles to the 44 sound phonemes. **Interpretation – knowledge**; learning to pronounce each of the phonemes. Being taught that visual clues in the book can aid context. **Interpretation – skills**; learning syntax, how words are segmented & how to blended together phonemes to pronounce words. Being taught to visually memorise some words because they aren’t phonetical. **Outcome**; combining these strategies so that the meaning of text is finally comprehended. **Evaluation**; develop reading fluency by being able to choose which strategy to apply and when.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Black Firs we believe that *all* our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression](#), which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching the foundation of phonics in the Early Years and follow the 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 are enabled with strategies to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Black Firs 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 for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Comprehension

At Black Firs we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with reading strategies to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. 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 Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

Implementation

Foundations for phonics in Preschool

We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for the 'Communication and Language' and 'Literacy' areas of the EYFS framework.

These include:

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

We ensure Preschool children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.

We follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress](#):

- Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
- Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. 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 child secures their learning.

We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children, highlighted on the Cohort Action Plan, urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. 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.

If any child in Year 3 to 6 has gaps in their phonic knowledge when reading or writing, they are highlighted on the Cohort Action Plan, to receive phonics 'catch-up' sessions to address specific reading /writing gaps. These short, sharp sessions last 10 minutes and take place at least three times a week.

Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week. These sessions:

- are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of '[Application of phonics to reading](#)'
- 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 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.

In Reception these sessions start around week 4. Children 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 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

Home reading

A link to an eBook version of the decodable book is made available to parents via Earwig to ensure success is shared with the family.

- Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children.
- 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.

Additional reading support for vulnerable children

- Children in Reception and Year 1 who are receiving additional phonics Keep-up sessions read their reading practice book to an adult daily.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach reading, so we have the same expectations of progress. 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 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 children at Black Firs 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.
- In EYFS, children have access to the reading corner every day in their exploring time and the books are continually refreshed.
- Parents of children from Reception onwards are encouraged to add an Earwig record to their child's timeline on regular basis that summarises their reading at home and ensures two-way communication.
- As the children progress through the school, they are encouraged to write their own comments and keep a list of the books/authors that they have read.
- Books and reading are celebrated throughout school through a number of events; World Book Day, trips to the library, Mystery Reader, author visits.

Impact

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

Assessment for learning is used:

- ✓ daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support
- ✓ weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative assessment is used:

- ✓ every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
- ✓ by SLT and scrutinised through the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.

Statutory assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Reporting

Reporting to parents is done on a termly basis at parent interviews. In addition, an annual report is sent home in July. At Black Firs we use “Earwig” as its on-going report system.

Record Keeping

- ✓ Annual report to parents
- ✓ Key Stage 1 and 2 test results as appropriate
- ✓ Phonics test for Y1 and above, where necessary.
- ✓ Reading records on Earwig
- ✓ Teacher records

Children with SEND

Please refer to Black Firs Policy Document on Special Needs.

Equal Opportunities

Please refer to the Black Firs Aims & Statement on Equal Opportunities.

Role of Reading Lead co-ordinator

- Lead by example showing a thorough and up to date knowledge of the subject including developments in curriculum and assessment.
- Be responsible for training and creating a highly competent team of expert reading teachers across school.
- Ensure that the delivery of reading lessons is delivered to a high standard and support staff with CPD, training and coaching where needed.
- Monitor the progress of the lowest % readers in each year group and ensure teaching and support are delivered well.
- Ensure that children receive phonics teaching until they can read with fluency.
- Ensure that class reading corners and bookshelves are stocked with quality texts and that these are routinely refreshed and updated.
- Ensure that children have access to decodable books that match their phonic ability.

Health & Safety

Please see also Black Firs Health & Safety Policy

Review

Black Firs policy for Early Reading reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole teaching staff and has the full agreement of the Governing Body.

This policy will be reviewed annually with the English Coordinator.