



The Blossom Curriculum

Reading Strategy



We have seven aims in supporting our children to become confident and able readers:

- We ensure that the teaching of reading is a strategic priority for our school.
- We foster a 'love of reading' at school and home.
- We teach phonics using a high quality support scheme.
- Phonics are taught from day one in reception and earlier in nursery if the children are ready.
- Our reading books are matched to the decoding skills of our children.
- The children who fall behind in reading are supported to catch up quickly.
- All staff are experts in early reading.

'Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.'

1 Timothy 4:13

1. We ensure that the teaching of reading is a strategic priority for our school.

As an infant school our main focus is to ensure that every child becomes a fluent, expressive, accurate and confident reader, enabling them to access all other areas of the curriculum. To ensure we achieve this, reading is always a top priority on our yearly MAT Raising Attainment Plan and on our school strategic development plan. On our school strategic plan, objectives are set, reviewed and updated throughout the year and the impact measured at the end of the academic year.

In 2019, 88% of our Year 1 children achieved the Phonics Screening Check compared with 82% nationally. 93% of our Year 2 retake children achieved the Phonics Screening Check compared to 92% nationally. All children complete the RWI Phonics full package (Phonics, Reading and Writing elements) across the school. Children who pass the PSC remain on the RWI programme until its completion. We follow the philosophy of thoroughly embedding learning, particularly in reading, before moving children on to new sounds or strategies.

Reading is taught every day with a substantial amount of directed time and a strong emphasis dedicated to it. It is taught through discrete focused reading lessons as well as being a vehicle to teach other cross curricular subjects.

Our bespoke curriculum, The Blossom Curriculum, is underpinned by religious teaching and our core Christian values, with reading being a crucial thread tying our topic curriculum together. In addition to discrete reading lessons (focusing on skills), teachers plan for children to use these taught skills to develop their wider curriculum subject knowledge through reading comprehension activities. We see 'talk' as the first fundamental step towards being able to comprehend and understand language. Which is why in the earlier years, we focus on comprehension through oracy to build and extend vocabulary as well as understanding. As children's comprehension improves and progresses, comprehension activities formalise. This could be inferring and making deductions from a photograph, watching a video clip and making notes on what they have seen or reading an excerpt linked to their topic and answering questions.

To support our children as life-long readers, we also work closely with St Meriadoc Junior School ensuring the taught strategies, techniques and terminologies learnt with us at the infant school continue into Year 3 and beyond.

2. We foster a 'love of reading' at school and home.

The Blossom Curriculum has a clear reading thread running through it to allow teachers to share their knowledge of children's literature and to read aloud to their pupils to promote the enjoyment of reading daily. Our topic curriculum is supported by a Reading Spine which runs from our two year olds in the nursery setting to our seven year olds in Year Two. The Reading Spine is a list of books that support topic learning, that every child will have read to them during their time here at St Meriadoc CE Infant Academy. The curriculum is also supported by a Poetry Spine. Every day children are read to. During this time teachers encourage children to discuss what they have read and to ask questions. Classrooms have a welcoming reading environment for children to use and children are taught to care and look after books.

All parents/carers are given a reading booklet when children start at our school detailing the importance of reading with and to their children. It also details how they can support their children at home. We also offer parent information sessions to share how we teach reading at school, so they can use the same techniques, terminology and strategies to support their child's reading at home. Children visit our well stocked library every week to take home a 'Read to Me' book to share at home.

As part of our curriculum, children from the age of two hear and are immersed in traditional tales and Bible stories. These stories are revisited and built upon as part of our 'spiral-style' curriculum to delve deeper into well-known stories as children get older. Children are introduced to more complex tales as they move through the school. Children can talk with understanding and enthusiasm about their favourite stories. This is supported in school by stories used in our Talk for Writing sessions, where children learn stories orally off by heart (imitate), change parts of the story but keeping the base text the same (innovate) and then create their own stories around the initial theme (invent).

3. We teach phonics using a high quality support scheme.

Phonics is taught following the full Read Write Inc Phonics programme, taught as intended by Ruth Miskin. This programme fully meets the national curriculum expectations in grapheme-phoneme correspondence and word reading as well as expectations for grammar, punctuation and spelling. All staff teaching phonics are fully trained RWI Tutors. RWI is led by a RWI trained Reading Leader who is supported by a trained RWI 1:1 intervention Tutor. In addition to this, the Head of School is a trained RWI Schools Leader, supporting other schools in the delivery of RWI in EYFS, KS1 and how to transition the strategies into KS2.

Children's phonic attainment is assessed every six to eight weeks and their progress is mapped. Children who are not on track receive bespoke 'Keep Up, Not Catch Up' intervention sessions.

4. Phonics are taught from day one in reception and earlier in nursery if the children are ready.

Children are immersed in phonics and the RWI frieze resources from our two to three year old nursery (Ladybirds). Phonics is not explicitly taught in Ladybirds, but phonics is used all around them from displays to modelled language and RWI strategies to support speech. As children move through our Ladybirds nursery and into our Dragonflies setting (three to four year olds) phonics and immersion in sounds is more prominent. Staff give instructions to children in 'Fred Talk'. Fred is a frog, a character in the RWI programme who children meet that can only speak in sounds. Children need to blend the sounds for Fred to put the word together. Initially, children need to be able to hear the sounds to blend orally before being able to read or spell the blended word. So, children in the younger settings may be asked to 's-i-t down'. The word 'sit' being spoken phonemically in sounds for the children to hear to blend themselves in order to complete the instruction. Makaton signs are also used alongside to support them. Games are played to focus on hearing initial sounds, such as collecting items around the setting that start with the sound 's'. The RWI sound cards are very visual across the nursery setting, for example they are hung above the painting easels, so children become familiar with them.

Formal teaching of phonics begins in Dragonflies as children become ready, usually in the Spring/Summer term before children are due to start school in September. Staff follow specific RWI Nursery planning to introduce Set

1 sounds, teach oral blending using the taught sounds, begin assisted blending with cards and on magnetic boards and some children begin blending independently to read and spell Set 1 words. Children are taught in small guided groups. Children are assessed using the linked RWI nursery assessment sheets. Progress is tracked to inform planning and to identify children in need of intervention. The RWI Reading Leader works closely with the nursery staff to coach and monitor provision of RWI Nursery Phonics.

When children start statutory schooling in our Reception classes, phonics is taught from day one. Children taught previously in our nursery settings are able to continue their phonics learning at their ability level, rather than starting from scratch and are grouped and taught accordingly. A new sound is introduced daily in pacy speed sound sessions (10 minutes max). Children are then taught in small guided groups in a carousel structure for letter formation, blending, reading and spelling. As these are small groups this gives quality focussed learning time.

Reception children are assessed in their fifth week of school and are ability grouped following the RWI programme. We ensure that sounds are known well and are truly embedded, focussing on the broadening of learning before moving on. Children who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified during assessment and are targeted in 'keep up, not catch up' intervention sessions.

Children continue on the RWI programme until they have completed it fully. This is usually by the start of the spring term in Year 2, although some children are speedier and others need longer to embed their learning. Throughout the programme, all children are assessed every 6-8 weeks. They are then regrouped and new targets set accordingly.

5. Our reading books are matched to the decoding skills of our children.

We follow a philosophy of celebrating children's reading. This is why children are never asked to read a book containing sounds or words that they have not yet been taught. All of our focussed phonics books in school are matched to the phonic ability and knowledge of the children. Children are never asked to read books with untaught sounds, to guess words from pictures, contexts or repetitive refrains or learn decodable words by sight without being underpinned by sounds. Words that are undecodable such as 'the', 'said' etc are called 'red words' in the RWI programme. These 'red words' are taught with the reading books, so children are only being asked to read words that they have been taught, allowing only for success in reading and celebration of learning. This is all explained to parents and carers at our 'Meet the Teacher' sessions, at our yearly RWI Parent Information evening and in our RWI Parent Information Booklet. These sessions share how they can support at home by teaching parents/carers the pure sounds, how to support when listening to their child read and teaching the RWI strategies used in school for reading and spelling.

Each week children take home the same book they have been reading in their RWI lessons. The purpose of this is so that children can literally 'show off' what a good reader they are at home; to re-read books developing fluency, expression and comprehension; to build confidence and a love of reading. It also shares with parents what their child has been focusing on that week in school. In addition to this, children also take a 'RWI Book Bag' book home with them. These are specifically linked to the sounds and 'red words' that the children have been taught, so again children are only being expected to read known sounds and words. The purpose of this is to read a new title, using the skills they have learnt that week in school. Children also choose a library book to share with an adult at home to promote the love of reading. Once children complete the RWI programme and have a developed phonemic knowledge, they are assessed against the upper book bands and eventually become a free reader. The higher ability book banded books are a bridge between the RWI texts and free reader books. This transition ensures children are closely assessed and are only reading books they are able to read. We support children in their choice of books, ensuring they pick books of their interest to continue to promote a love of reading.

During our topic time in the afternoons, children take part in cross-curricular reading comprehension. These activities are varied and could be anything from inference from a photograph to reading a passage about the topic and answering questions. The reading excerpts are closely matched to the reading ability and phonemic knowledge of the class as a whole. Children read these independently, in groups or in pairs. Another strategy we are introducing is the Paired Reading technique. This is a research-based fluency strategy used with readers who lack fluency. In this strategy, students read aloud to each other in unison. More fluent readers can be paired with less fluent readers, or children who read at the same level can be paired to reread passage they have already read. This supports and builds their confidence and fluency as a reader.

6. The children who fall behind in reading are supported to catch up quickly.

Children's reading attainment and progress is assessed, reviewed and targets set regularly at Pupil Progress Meetings. Children accessing the Read Write Inc (RWI) Phonics package are assessed every six to eight weeks. Following assessment by our RWI Reading Lead, children are regrouped, target sounds identified and strategies are set. A clear progression guide is written and shared with all RWI tutors, so every RWI tutor knows exactly what each of the children in their group needs support with in order to progress. These guides are also given to class teachers so there is consistency in the support given to children in all writing sessions across the curriculum. Following assessment, any children who are making slower than expected progress are identified and are targeted in 1:1 tutoring sessions. A bespoke and timely 1:1 tutoring plan is written and delivered by a trained RWI Phonics Tutor with children being assessed every session. Children receiving 1:1 tutoring continue to learn in their ability group RWI sessions in the morning to keep up with their current learning in addition to the 1:1 intervention sessions. Some children use this intervention for a short period of time and others for longer spells, all following the need of the child.

As a precursor to the 1:1 tutoring intervention, we also have daily in class based 'keep up, not catch up' sessions for any children who have been identified that morning by their RWI group tutor who may be in need of extra support and are at risk of falling behind. Some children need support in sound retention and an extra recap of that morning's learning in the afternoon is sometimes enough to prevent them from falling behind.

RWI tutors write the child's name and focus sound on a sticky note and put this on the 'Keep up, not catch up' board in the staffroom after their RWI group morning lesson. Class teaching assistants take off any sticky notes for children in their class and ensure they reteach that sound in the afternoon recording the intervention on a Record of Intervention sheet, so children who are needing repeat sessions can be monitored and potentially moved earlier onto the 1:1 tutoring programme if needed.

If needed, children in Year 2 who are no longer on the RWI programme, receive in class reading intervention. We are looking at developing our intervention programme focusing on vocabulary, inference, predictions, explanations, retrieval and sequencing (VIPERS) to support their comprehension skills. This intervention usually begins in the spring term. The VIPERS strategy is used at the junior school and is a technique we are looking to embed to support transition into Year 3.

Children who are new to the school are assessed immediately and accurately using the RWI assessment sheets and are grouped accordingly with targets and support set to catch up if needed.

7. All staff are experts in early reading.

All staff are fully trained in the full RWI Phonics package. We work with a RWI trainer consultant on bespoke development days tailored to our needs to develop our practice. This also ensures we keep up to date with new initiatives, strategies or techniques. All new staff receive RWI regional training and are supported in school by the Reading Leader through close coaching and monitoring. All staff who deliver RWI are referred to as RWI tutors and are supported by a fully qualified RWI Reading Leader. RWI tutors receive in school development training, weekly coaching and drop-in lesson monitoring to ensure the programme is taught consistently and accurately. The Head of School is a RWI trained Reading Leader and previous phonics trust advisor. She is currently leading the early reading strand of the MAT development plan and is supporting the other schools in the MAT on their phonics provision in FS and KS1 as well as ensuring consistent strategies are used into and across KS2. All RWI assessments are shared with the Head of School and children's specific targets are written together with the RWI Reading Leader and shared with RWI tutors and class teachers. Children's assessments are also reviewed at pupil progress meetings. All RWI 1:1 tutoring intervention plans are shared with the Head of School prior to being taught and after to measure the impact. Children are encouraged, and staff continue to model and refer to, the taught RWI strategies in all reading across the curriculum once they have completed the RWI programme. Staff in Year 2 use RWI comprehension to ensure continuity and consistency following completion of RWI Phonics. Our Year 2 English Lead has been trained in the ERIC and 'Tell Me...' approach reading comprehension strategies which are all used across the school.

